



*Gillman & Soame, Ltd.,  
Oxford.*

CHANCELLOR OF THE EXCHEQUER, 1913.

W. Watkin Davies

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LLOYD GEORGE

1863-1914

LONDON

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CONSTABLE & COMPANY LIMITED



PUBLISHED BY  
*Constable and Company Ltd.*  
LONDON

*The Macmillan Company*  
*of Canada, Limited*  
TORONTO

*First published 1939*

PRINTED IN GREAT BRITAIN BY  
WYMAN & SONS, LTD., LONDON, FAKENHAM AND READING

## PREFACE

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SOME word of explanation may, with advantage, be given for this particular biography of Mr. Lloyd George. The present writer feels that the years with which this volume deals are now so definitely a part of history, and that the great rôle which Mr. Lloyd George played in them is so clearly marked off from his subsequent activities, that something like a candid and settled verdict upon them seems to be possible.

The writer has known Mr. Lloyd George all through his life; and is himself a native of Criccieth, and a product of that same Liberal-Nonconformist Wales of the last decade of the nineteenth century. But subsequent study, and many years devoted to the academic teaching of history and politics, have, perhaps, enabled him to view the events of his own youth with the detachment proper to the historian. It is in that combination—an intimate acquaintance with the subject, coupled with an instinctive sympathy for it, and some ability to treat it in a detached way, that any merit this book may possess lies. This at least is certain: no man who is ignorant of Welsh, and who has not been brought up in the Welsh Radical-Dissenting tradition, will ever prove a successful interpreter of the Lloyd George of pre-War days.

The author is deeply grateful to Dame Margaret Lloyd George, and to Mr. William George, for their kind help in the matter of illustrations for this book. His debt to Mr. William George's memoir of Richard Lloyd will be obvious to all readers of that interesting and beautiful book.

*Birmingham,*  
*October, 1938.*

W. W. D.

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## CHAPTER ONE

### BOYHOOD [1863-1877]

WELSH villages are not, as a rule, noted for their picturesqueness. The tradition of the country, in fact, knows nothing of the village as a social and economic unit. Wales was a land of scattered farms and cottages, with here and there a foreign fortified town thrown in. But Llanystumdwy is an exception. Its houses (dwellings of workmen and small shopkeepers) are ordinary enough, looked at individually; but the appearance of the place as a whole is eminently pleasing. Right through the village runs the Dwyfor, a sparkling trout stream which, rising on the slopes of Moel Hebog, the southernmost outpost of Snowdonia some fifteen miles to the north, finds its way amid sand and shingle into the sea a mile or so to the south. At Llanystumdwy the river is spanned by an ancient stone bridge, over which runs the main coast road. There is no building of any note in the village, but it possesses a characteristic little church, a commodious chapel, and an elementary school. Just a mile to the east lies Criccieth, whose castle ruins, perched on a steep rock rising out of the sea, are a conspicuous landmark for many miles around. Northward the high road leads to Caernarvon, the county town. To the west are Pwllheli and Nevin and the wide farms of Lley. Directly in front, though separated from the village by a mile of meadow land, is Cardigan Bay, across whose waters can be seen the rugged Merionethshire hills, towered over by Cader Idris; while

## LLOYD GEORGE: 1863-1914

on a clear day the eye follows the coast of Cardiganshire and Pembroke as far as St. David's. A ten minutes' walk up the hill behind the village brings us to a spot from which Snowdon can be clearly descried, its finely shaped peak standing out above its numerous satellites. Just outside the village of Llanystumdwy stands an ancient farmhouse called Ynysgain Ganol; and in it was born, in the year 1800, a boy to whom the name David Lloyd was given. While still young he moved into the village, and there set up in business as a cobbler, or rather as a manufacturer of boots. In those days no one in rural Wales ever dreamt of ordering boots from a shop; they were made for them, entirely by hand, by the village shoemaker. Although David Lloyd's interests lay in the things of the mind and the soul, rather than in the works of his hands, it is evident that he must have possessed a good measure of professional skill, for he succeeded in creating a business which provided adequately for himself and his descendants for fifty years.

Not long after migrating to Llanystumdwy, David Lloyd married Rebecca Samuel, a member of a well-known family in Lleyn. Let no anti-Semite prick up his ears, and imagine that he has discovered a Jewish ancestry for Mr. Lloyd George. "Rebecca Samuel", and the like, are only evidence of the popularity of the Bible in Wales, and the almost total absence of real surnames. David Lloyd has been described by his son as "a fair man, tall and symmetrical, with broad shoulders, upright standing and exceptionally refined and natural movements. His mildness of spirit, strong sense, cultivated mind, and extensive general knowledge caused him to stand very high in the estimation and respect of all, high and low, in the locality in which he was known".

An Englishman would doubtless consider a cobbler's workshop a very humble home for a future Prime Minister ;

and in a sense, of course, it was so. But it must be borne in mind that, apart from the Anglicised squirearchy to be found scattered all over the country, Welsh society in the nineteenth century was wellnigh classless. There were richer and poorer, master and servant, to be sure; but apart from distinctions of calling, the most complete equality existed between all. In Wales it was neither unusual nor surprising to discover that the barrister, the professor, the minister, or even the bishop, had a father or a brother who was still pursuing his calling as cobbler or farm labourer in obscurity. The main reason for this—for the fact that a real equality could subsist between persons who in differently constituted societies never met except professionally—is to be found in the cultural conditions prevailing. Welsh culture was a democratic and largely an amateur one. The famous poet was generally a plain working man labouring in field or quarry. Sunday school for all adults (a perfect Workers' Educational Association in fact) had awakened a whole people to a vivid interest in questions of literature, history, ethics, and theology. George Borrow again and again expresses surprise at the fact that the humblest Welshman can talk literary criticism in a way unknown outside academic circles in England. And in our own day, that acute observer of national characteristics, Sir Alfred Zimmern, has drawn attention to the fact that, while a compartment full of miscellaneous Englishmen will discuss football and the chances of the racing favourite, a number of Welshmen in the same circumstances will be discussing the philosophy of last Sunday's sermon, or the fitness of a particular scholar to be chosen head of the university.

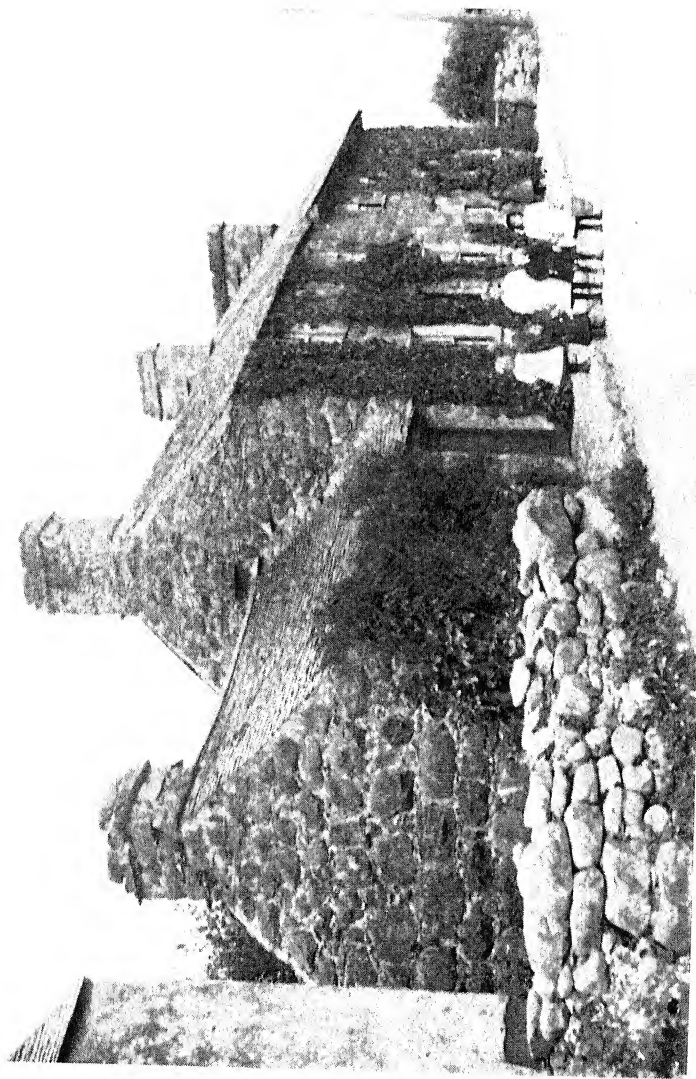
David Lloyd was the fine flower of this democratic Welsh culture. His main interest centred in the Baptist Church at Crickieth. Those were the early days in which

Nonconformity in Wales was a living flame, attracting the very best into its ranks, and winning from them an absolute devotion. In the village of Llanystumdwy David Lloyd and his family were the only Baptists; and the attempt to found a small church there had failed. The mother church of the whole district was at Pen-y-Maes, Criccieth. To this day the small grey stone building stands, at the top of the village, only a stone's throw from Mr. Lloyd George's Welsh home—Brynawelon. It served a large area; for worshippers came to it on foot every Sunday from places as far away as Clynnog, a dozen miles to the north; and Portmadoc, five miles to the south. Because of the long journey, it was necessary for them to bring with them provisions to be eaten in the interval between the Sunday services, and for that reason they came to be popularly known as "Bread and Cheese Baptists". Among these Baptists a paid ministry found no place, but it was customary for every church to elect one or more of its members to act as overseers or pastors. To this honourable office David Lloyd was elected in 1830, and in it he served faithfully until his death nine years later.

When David Lloyd died at the age of thirty-nine, he left a widow and three young children. The two eldest were girls—Elen and Elizabeth. To Elen fell the commonplace lot of being married to an intelligent Criccieth farmer—William Jones of Caerdyni. For Elizabeth, however, the Fates had in store one of the most striking romances of modern times! She went as domestic servant to a family at Pwllheli, fell in love there with William George, who was master of a small school, and in due course gave birth to a future Prime Minister. David Lloyd's only son was named Richard, and he was five years old when his father died.

Fortunately there was in the widow the same strength and independence of character that was afterwards so





*George Eastman,  
Manchester.*

THE OLD HOME AT LLANYSTUMDWY.

materially a characteristic of her son, and of her world-famous grandson. Without a moment's hesitation she decided that the business must be carried on, and carried on it was, and that successfully, with hired cobblers under her management, under the name of "Beca Llwyd". The actual work of boot-making was performed by the servants; but Rebecca herself used to walk the eight miles to Pwllheli to buy leather and what other materials were required. She also had full control over the financial side of the enterprise. Mr. Lloyd George remembers long walks, holding his grandmother's hand, from farm to farm, taking orders for new boots or repairs, and receiving payment for past services rendered. The old lady and the child were everywhere received with warm hospitality; and when justice had been done to a good tea, and much conversation had flowed along with it, the farmer's wife would generally come to business with the remark: "By the way, Beca Llwyd, we owe you a trifle." "Please don't bother about that," Rebecca would reply. "Oh, I would far rather settle it now, if you can remember how much it amounts to," the farmer's wife would proceed. Then, diving into an immense pocket concealed in the voluminous folds of her skirt, Rebecca would, after much rummaging, pull out a bill, remarking: "How very odd that I should happen to have this bill with me. But since you insist on paying it, here it is."

Much the same ritual would be gone through at the next farm; but there, perhaps, payment would be made in butter, bacon, or some other form of produce. Nightfall would see Rebecca Lloyd and her grandson, heavily laden with provisions, and with some ready money in her pocket as well, approaching their humble village home. Such was business in rural Wales seventy years ago. Its scale was small, and its profits insignificant; but it was full of that

human factor which machinery, mass production, and companies have, between them, pretty well killed in our day.

Meanwhile, Rebecca's only son, Richard, was growing up, and becoming ready to take his father's place in the business. In those days, there was no educational system in the villages of Wales. Some sort of school usually existed, kept, as often as not, by a retired private from the army, a man whose sole justification for the work consisted in an ability to read, write, and count, and to speak a little English. The gross ignorance, as well as the brutality, of these village schoolmasters has been the theme of many pens, from those of Welsh novelists like Daniel Owen to those of Royal Commissioners. One of these Government reports declares that "the buildings and the furniture are in a disgraceful condition. The books are scarce and unsuitable, and the property of the children themselves. The teachers have been through no course of training, and as a rule are ignorant of the subjects they profess to teach, and, indeed, even of the English language also. I found these schools lacking in any sort of system, and education in them confined to the most narrow limits. The scholars in them were more ignorant than in any other class of school". These scathing words were applied, among others, to the Endowed Church of England School of Llanystumdwy. Such was the schooling, and the only schooling, received by the uncle and guardian of the future Prime Minister. In any case, Richard Lloyd had but little of it, for he was early apprenticed to the shoemaker's trade, which he was to ply until ill health caused him to relinquish it at the age of forty-six. He himself used ruefully to declare that the only permanent legacy which he took away with him from school was the total loss of hearing in one ear. It was the consequence of a blow dealt at the side of the head by the savage schoolmaster.

Evidently his school had little, if anything, to do with the clear mind, the broad culture, and the immense general knowledge which were found in Richard Lloyd's possession in after years. Those things he derived from the debate of village smithy and cobbler's shop, and from the Baptist Church. Richard Lloyd was baptised when he had attained his nineteenth year. The rite took place in the River Dwyfor, the stream which has always brought such delight to the heart of Mr. Lloyd George, and whose name he bestowed upon one of his houses. In later years, Lloyd himself contributed to a Welsh periodical a graphic description of one of these open-air baptisms: "It was on the banks of the Dwyfor, at a spot known as Rhyd-y-Benllig, that the Brotherhood at Criccieth used to administer baptism in days gone by, though it was a mile and a half from the town. Rhyd-y-Benllig and its surroundings is one of the fairest regions that eye has ever beheld. Before, and after, reaching the lovely and pleasant spot, the Dwyfor flows through flat lowlands, with woods on both sides. But at Rhyd-y-Benllig the trees recede, and the broad clear river is plainly in view. On one side rises a grassy slope, affording opportunity for rest to the visitors, as well as a convenient view-point for the simple ceremonial to be performed. That was the chosen Baptistry of the old Brethren; and no better one could be imagined—the lambent waters in full view; the rising bank making a sort of natural gallery, row above row, serving equally the convenience of everyone, server and speaker, spectator and listener to the Word. It is no wonder that on these occasions crowds would come thither from the whole surrounding country, near and far." Of life in this Nonconformist country, bracing for body and mind alike, we shall have much to say when we describe the adolescent years of Mr. Lloyd George.

For Richard Lloyd, as for his father before him, the

Baptist Church at Criccieth supplied the opportunity for the training, and the display, of his conspicuous gifts of mind and character. He had grown to a tall and well-built man. His face was full of intelligence and benevolence. In later years he wore a flowing white beard. Though only a village shoemaker, he was renowned for his perfect manners and simple dignity. In the whole country round, there was no one more highly respected. Richard Lloyd was, of course, much more than a shoemaker: his intellectual gifts were of a very high order, and his eloquence that of the born orator. Fortunately, in the Wales of the middle years of the nineteenth century, there was ample opportunity for a man, though following some manual occupation in pursuit of a living, to use to the full the mental endowments that he possessed. Like his father, Richard Lloyd belonged to a religious sect which did not believe in a professional ministry; but any layman who possessed gifts of personality, allied with eloquence and learning, was accorded a leading position, and was regularly given the opportunity of preaching at the Sunday services. The pulpit utterances of Richard Lloyd were notable. Many years later, Mr. Lloyd George, when he had been listening to a sermon by one of the greatest Welsh preachers of the day, concluded a warm eulogy of it with the remark: "Just like Uncle at his best."

But although being the spiritual leader of a little Baptist Brotherhood brought honour and happiness to Richard Lloyd, it brought no financial remuneration, and for that he had to look to his week-day work as shoemaker. The cobbler's house adjoined the workshop. Needless to say, the home was a humble one, for money was very scarce. Modern working men would probably turn away in disdain from its simple furniture and from the plain fare which was to be seen daily on its table. There were no luxuries and

not many books ; but such books as there were possessed that solid quality which provides companionship to a thinking man during the leisure hours of a lifetime.

One day in the month of June in the year 1864, there arrived at Richard Lloyd's home three small children—Mary George, David Lloyd George, and William George—with their widowed mother, a sister of the Llanystumdwy shoemaker. The children's father, William George, had recently died, leaving wife and children almost without provision. His early home had been in Pembrokeshire, where he was born in 1820, the son of a prosperous farmer, a deeply religious man, and a Baptist, who taught his boy to love knowledge and to fear God. Educational opportunities were then scanty in Wales ; nevertheless, William George amassed enough learning to obtain a teaching post in a school in London. His sojourn in the metropolis, however, was not of long duration, for he was soon appointed to a mastership at a Unitarian school in Liverpool. For William George this proved a fortunate move, for in Liverpool he had the good fortune to strike a close friendship with the famous Unitarian divine, James Martineau. English and Welsh Nonconformity in those days was sincere and intense, but extremely narrow. Martineau, on the other hand, was markedly liberal among a body noted for their theological breadth. His influence upon George was considerable ; and although the latter never slandered the Baptist faith, he held it thenceforth with the width of outlook of a philosopher. In 1852 he left Liverpool, being presented on his departure by the " teachers and conductors " of Hope Street Sunday Schools with a copy of *Webster's Dictionary* and sixteen volumes of the *Penny Encyclopædia*.

William George's next venture took the form of a private grammar school at Haverfordwest, in his native country ;

but success did not attend this effort, and in 1857 he accepted the headmastership of the British School at Pwllheli in Caernarvonshire. He was then thirty-seven years old. Pwllheli is but seven miles from Llanystumdwy. To that village the schoolmaster, now entering upon middle age, repaired frequently; for it was the centre for the meeting of the poets and literary men of the countryside. An even stronger reason for his visits may no doubt be found in the fact that he had, at Pwllheli, already made the acquaintance of Elizabeth Lloyd, Richard Lloyd's sister. Acquaintanceship resulted in love, and a few months later the couple were married.

Evidently William George was somewhat of a rolling stone, for after only two years' tenure of his post at Pwllheli, he migrated to Newchurch, a cold and damp Lancashire village, whose people he did not like, and who did not like him. He soon left it to become headmaster of a large school in Manchester. The post was a temporary one, and the family lived only three months in Manchester. But during that time a second child was born to William and Elizabeth George, a son to whom they gave the name David Lloyd. This was on January 17th, 1863; and by so narrow a margin was it that Mr. Lloyd George secured the distinction of being Manchester born!

It was William George's last experience of teaching. His health had by now given unmistakable signs of decay, and he decided to return to his native land, there to devote the remainder of his days to agricultural pursuits. The end, however, was fast approaching. He leased a small farm at Bulford, not far from Haverfordwest, and there, after two years, he died of an attack of pneumonia. He was only forty-four.

Mrs. George's brother, Richard Lloyd of Llanystumdwy, was thirty years old when this family tragedy occurred. He

had never in all his life slept a single night away from his native village. Yet on hearing of his brother-in-law's illness, he immediately set out on the long two days' journey to Pembrokeshire. When he arrived, however, he found that the end had come. The poor widow was stupefied by the sudden blow. A few hundred pounds, an excellent library, two small children, with a third soon to be born—that was the estate bequeathed to his widow by William George. It did not take Richard Lloyd many hours to decide what ought to be done: the lease of the farm must be surrendered, and the mother and children must migrate to Llanystumdwy and make their permanent home with him. This generous offer was accepted, and the move took place with as little delay as possible. Thus it was that Mr. Lloyd George found a new home, and a man who was to him for fifty years all that the best of fathers could ever be to his own children. The future Premier was at that time not quite two years old; but the grief-stricken home, and the move to a new one, made a deep and abiding impression upon his mind. He still remembers how he and his sister placed stones beneath the garden gate to prevent the "wicked people" carrying away the furniture.

In the new home at Llanystumdwy old Rebecca Lloyd was still mistress, and so she remained until her death in 1868. Her masterful personality thus had only four years in which to impress itself upon her grandson David; and as he was but five years old when she died, it would be fanciful, perhaps, to trace any of his later characteristics to her influence. But if there is as much as many are now disposed to allow in heredity, can we not discern some of her courage, her self-reliance, her tact, and her complete mastery of a difficult situation reflected, and indeed magnified, in the Prime Minister of the future?



Richard Lloyd's home (with the incongruous English name "Highgate") stood in the middle of the village, facing the main road which runs from Criccieth to Pwllheli. Travellers passing that way may still see it; for the building, solidly constructed of the native grey stone of the locality, remains pretty much as it was when first put up by David Lloyd, more than a century ago. The house consisted of a parlour, a kitchen and a scullery on the ground floor; and two fairly commodious bedrooms upstairs. Behind the house was a good-sized garden. In the parlour stood a sofa, a round table, some antique chairs and a large cupboard with glass doors. The upper portion of the cupboard contained the volumes of *Webster's Dictionary* and *Penny Encyclopædia* presented to William George when he was leaving Hope Street, Liverpool. In the lower part was kept the best tea-service. This room was never used for the ordinary life of the family: that was lived in the kitchen. But as the two boys grew older, and their ability began to proclaim itself, it became a study to which they could always retire when they wanted to be alone with their books. Richard Lloyd's workshop adjoined the house, a plain, one-storied edifice. In it a large front room faced the road, and here the cobbler and his two men sat upon three benches. Behind was another room, used as an office and for the storing of leather and boots. The outside walls of the house were covered with roses, for Mrs. George was passionately fond of flowers. There was also a sign above the door—a boot, and over it, the inscription: "Richard Lloyd, Gwneuthurwr." The pronouncing and interpreting of this formidable Welsh word used to cause much perplexity, and sometimes merriment, to passing English visitors. "What is the meaning of that very long word on your sign?" asked one of them. "Oh," replied Richard Lloyd without a moment's hesitation, "the

English for that is 'Man-u-fact-ur-er—'—drawing out the word to its greatest possible length!

Judged by middle-class standards even in those days, the home was a poor one; and poor it certainly would be considered to-day by most skilled workmen in regular employ. There was no margin at all for luxuries, even if such things had been thought of in the Llanystumdwy of the 1860's. But the legend that Mr. Lloyd George was reared in abject poverty is a gross travesty of the truth. His brother has recently given it as his opinion that no family in the village kept a better table. The food was plain, but it was always plentiful, and always wholesome. Tinned food, which has since become such a curse in the cottage homes of Wales, was still unknown: butter, milk, and eggs, all fresh from the farm, abundant garden produce, wholemeal bread baked at home, and good meat and bacon—that was the staple diet of the family. The widow's income, derived from investments in a Building Society, never exceeded £50 a year. Richard Lloyd was an excellent craftsman, but he had little of his mother's business acumen. He hated sending out bills, and only too frequently that encouraged the more distressed among his neighbours to put off paying indefinitely. Generosity, and a contempt for saving, was also a part of his character. Nevertheless, there is good reason for believing that for many years he was earning a very comfortable livelihood. Mrs. George was a first-rate housekeeper, always able to extract the last ounce of benefit from her slender resources.

In the matter of clothes (made, of course, by a local tailor from Welsh homespun) the utmost care was taken to obtain the longest possible wear out of every garment. A suit, when it had grown too small for David, was passed on to the younger brother, William. The two boys, however, always gave an impression of neatness. "I think William

George and his brother," remarked Mrs. Evans, the wife of the village schoolmaster, "are the best-dressed children in school. I noticed them as soon as I came here."

A few years later, the shoe really did begin to pinch. Mrs. George's little income had greatly shrunk. Richard Lloyd's health was showing signs of decay, and the day came, when he was still a comparatively young man, when he was obliged to give up his calling altogether. He was pastor of the Criccieth Baptist Brotherhood from 1859 until his death in 1917; but for his indefatigable services to religion he never received a single penny. Meanwhile, family expenditure was increasing year by year--rent, rates, and the cost of living generally, were going up; and above all, the two boys were showing such talent at school that ambitious plans concerning their future were beginning to be entertained. It was becoming quite evident that the cobbler's awl, or the farm labourer's scythe, were not the fitting implements wherewith to equip David Lloyd George for life. It was of this period of greatest stress that Mr. Lloyd George was probably thinking when he wrote in an article, many years later: "Our bread was home-made, we scarcely ate fresh meat, and I remember that our greatest luxury was half-an-egg for each child on Sunday morning."

It was in 1869, when he was six years of age, that David Lloyd George (or "Davy Lloyd", as he seems to have been usually called by the villagers) first went to school. Llanystumdwy school was a "National" one, run by the Church of England. Its headmaster was, of necessity, a Churchman; and the tenets of the Church, including the Catechism, were sedulously taught to all the pupils. Parson, squire and master were the three persons responsible for its management. In itself the system was grievously unfair; for all the children, with very few exceptions, belonged to zealous Nonconformist families. But there was no option:



*George Boardman,  
Manchester.*

MR. LLOYD GEORGE'S MOTHER.

either the child went to the Church school, or else he remained without schooling altogether.

But having noted this fundamental grievance, there remains but to praise, almost without qualification, the school to which Lloyd George was sent. Indeed he was extraordinarily fortunate in being ready for it at that particular time. For the old and terrible conditions which obtained in the days of his grandfather and uncle were over, and there had come to Llanystumdwy as schoolmaster a man of the very highest qualifications for the work. David Evans (that was his name) was a most exceptional man. Learned himself far beyond the usual standard of his work, he had a passion, and a rare gift, for imparting knowledge to others. He was proficient not only in the subjects commonly taught in elementary schools, but also in Greek, Latin, the higher mathematics and even in astronomy and jurisprudence. And not only was he an able teacher: he was also the guide and friend of the children and their parents out of school. The prescribed curriculum of a village National School, intended for children who, at the age of twelve or thereabouts, would be leaving in order to take their place in farm, shop, and factory, was naturally very restricted and elementary; but David Evans used to single out boys of uncommon ability, and to form them into a sort of private continuation class. It was in that way that Lloyd George had his feet placed fairly and squarely upon the first rungs of the ladder of fame. Fortune had given him none of the advantages which usually surrounded the boyhood of future Cabinet Ministers in the nineteenth century—neither wealth, nor first-rate schooling, nor influential relations and friends; all these things, and many others, were lacking. Yet one cannot but realise that Fortune was still very kind to him when she gave him a saintly genius for a foster-father, a uniquely gifted

schoolmaster, and an environment which was well calculated to foster grit, determination, industry, and self-confidence, backed by a broad peasant culture of real value. That such was the case, Mr. Lloyd George himself would be the first to allow. Towards the old uncle ("Uncle Lloyd" as he was always known in the family) his affection till the end of his days was only equalled by his gratitude and his admiration. Towards his old schoolmaster also Lloyd George has always felt real gratitude and admiration. In 1909, when he had just become Chancellor of the Exchequer, and was perhaps the most talked-of person in British politics, he attended an open-air meeting at Llanystumdwy to receive a presentation from his old schoolfellows. There the schoolmaster, then an old man, and his brilliant pupil, publicly exchanged compliments which obviously came straight from their hearts. "No pupil," declared the Chancellor, "ever had a finer teacher." "No teacher," replied the schoolmaster, "ever had a more apt pupil. He was always particularly good at doing sums; and now he is doing the big sum which we have all got to pay!"

How fortunate Lloyd George was in his schooling we can see by comparing his youth with that of the only other Welshman of the later nineteenth century who approached him in genius—Owen Morgan Edwards. This gifted man was born in 1858 (five years before Lloyd George) in a tiny farmhouse which nestled against the slopes of one of the loftiest of Merionethshire mountains. He ended his days as Chief Inspector of Education for Wales; and in the meantime he had performed several achievements, any one of which would have brought distinction enough to an ordinary man—being one of the most brilliant of Oxford dons, having written a dozen or more Welsh prose classics, and turned the whole course of Welsh elementary education from a purely English into a predominantly Welsh channel.

At Llanuwchllyn, the village in which he was born and bred, there were two schools—a non-sectarian British School and an Anglican National School. Owen Edwards's family were, to a man, ardent Nonconformists ; but his father was a tenant on the estate of a great territorial magnate ; and in those days of aristocratic tyranny, few tenants would have dared to go counter to the wishes of the squire in so important a matter as a son's education. Tenants, almost down to the end of the nineteenth century, were evicted by the hundred for casting a vote against the candidate favoured by the Plas. To the Church school, therefore, Owen Edwards was sent. There it was an offence, followed by humiliating punishment, to speak a word of Welsh. The education imparted was atrociously bad. Nothing seemed to be aimed at save the inculcating of a servile attitude towards squire and parson, and a contempt for Nonconformity and all things Welsh. The tragic consequence was that Owen Edwards left with his mind permanently warped. By the force of tremendous reaction, he came to consider the learning of Welsh as of greater importance than the learning of English ; and to the end of his days he never freed himself from the delusion that all Englishmen were in a conspiracy with the baser sort of Welshmen to betray the highest interests of Wales. His own achievements in the realm of letters were brilliant ; his travel books are not inferior to those of Heine ; but his educational activities in Wales were, on the whole, disastrous, and productive of far more harm than good. To them must be traced (though he himself would have repudiated any such development) that nationalism run to seed which has so warped the judgment of moral and ordinarily sane people that they have acclaimed the criminal and foolish burning of the Caernarvonshire aerodrome as an act of heroism ! What Owen Edwards failed to realise was that nationalism is the most harmful of all

the political dreams which afflict the modern world ; and that it is infinitely more important for a Welshman, a Scot, and an Englishman, too, that he should grow into the larger patriotism of the British Commonwealth than that he should dwell within the cramping limitations of his own parochial patriotism.

Lloyd George, on the other hand, although brought up likewise in a Church school, thanks largely to the superiority, mental and moral, of the master, escaped these warping influences ; and we perceive in him the steady evolution of a Welsh village lad, limited by all the physical and intellectual conditions of his surroundings, into a broad citizen of the Empire. No Welsh was taught at Llanystumdwy school ; nor, so far as we can discover, was any special mention made of the history of Wales. These, of course, were serious shortcomings ; for although it is more important even for a Welsh boy that he should know the language and the history of England than that he should know those of Wales, it is better still that he should know both. Lloyd George learnt Welsh on the hearth and at his chapel, where it was the only language used. And his reading soon made him acquainted with as much as any man, nor a professional scholar, need know about the history and literature of Wales. In the case of Owen Edwards, it was the English bias of his school that awakened lifelong rebellion in him. But in the case of Lloyd George it was the offence against liberty which rankled. And that distinction shows how very much greater a man Lloyd George was. The one remained hypnotised by the petty grievances of a tiny locality, grievances which belonged to a very brief period of history ; while the other related his grievance to first principles, true everywhere and at all times. Insistence upon nationality must split the human race into warring factions to the end of time. But insistence upon liberty is perhaps the one



possible road to peace, as it certainly is the one foundation upon which mutual respect and toleration can be built.

Lloyd George has always loved Wales—its scenery, its language, its people, and its ways; but he has learned to merge that love in something much bigger and nobler—the common allegiance of a multitude of nations to the great ideals which uphold the British Commonwealth. To mention that with approval is in one way to condone the scandalous condition of Welsh education in the middle years of the nineteenth century. Lloyd George's schoolmaster happened to be a good and learned man; but just as easily might he have been ignorant and slack. Above all, it is essential to bear in mind what a great chasm had come into being between life and education in Wales: the life was Welsh and Nonconformist, while the education was English and Episcopal. And where such a divorce exists, education is bound to fail, and life is certain to be embittered and impoverished. It is only fair to note, however, that in the thirty years which begin in 1859, Wales was nourishing a race of men who, in after days,—in school, college, office and Parliament,—served the Principality with an ability and a sanely directed devotion which has never been matched before or since.

When the top form had been reached, and the ordinary school career was consequently at an end, David Evans took Lloyd George, together with two other boys of promise, and made of them a voluntary class. They used to sit at a table near the master's desk, and in that way they obtained a sound knowledge of Latin and mathematics. It is notoriously easy, once a man has attained to high office, to read back into his perfectly ordinary boyhood signs of future greatness which were not really present. But when due allowance has been made for this natural tendency,

enough remains to prove that Lloyd George was an exceptionally brilliant boy, who early in life attracted the notice of all who came in contact with him. One of the many biographies of him which have been published contains an interesting account from the pen of an old fellow-pupil: "I attended the school at Llanystumdwy," he writes, "at the time when David Lloyd George commenced his education there. He was known among his school associates as David Lloyd, and he and I were for some time together in the same class. In his early days at school David Lloyd was not so quick a learner as some of his class-mates. But he was always to the fore in geography and arithmetic, and he was especially strong in practice sums. His weakest point was his penmanship, which his companions used to characterise as 'crows' feet'. In his early years he was not so devoted to outdoor games as is suggested in some quarters. On the contrary, he was quite a bookworm. After tea he would remain in the house poring over books, and especially the Scriptures, under the direction of his uncle, while the rest of us would be indulging in games. Herein lies the real secret of his intimate knowledge of the Scriptures, and the ease with which he is able to weave Biblical references into the texture of his speeches. Even in those early days there was something in his demeanour which marked him out from among his associates after the manner of Joseph and his brethren. I and most of the children usually carried only one book to and from school, but he would always have a whole bundle under his arm, and he walked as if conscious of a future destiny. He carried the books always under the same arm, and unwittingly he contracted the habit of drooping his head—a characteristic which earned for him from some of the children the sobriquet of 'Old Methodist'. I cannot remember him being punished at any time by the old

schoolmaster, David Evans. I distinctly recall that his demeanour was always one of marked quietness."

This account rings true. The proficiency in geography and arithmetic, the voracious appetite for books, the undecipherable calligraphy, the intimate knowledge of the Bible, and that "something" which has always made him different from other men—all these are authentic marks of the Lloyd George that we have come to know. It must be confessed, however, that the distaste for outdoor life, the unsociability, and, above all, the "marked quietness", are features which are a little difficult to recognise.

Nevertheless, despite the pupil's respect for his master, school life was not altogether harmonious, nor was Lloyd George always docile. There came a moment when he rebelled fiercely against the rules of the place, and showed for the first time that spirit of independence, and that determination to stand up for his principles, of which the country as a whole was to receive such clear demonstration in the days of the Boer War and the Education Act.

It has already been remarked that Llanystumdwy school was the property of the Church of England; that Church which Richard Lloyd, in common with nearly all his neighbours, tended to regard not merely as something alien to Wales, but as something alien to Christianity itself. For these men were true Nonconformists, believing with an intensity of conviction which we but seldom find to-day that establishment, ritual, liturgy, and priesthood were all evil things, and not just matters of religious taste. About the political position of the Church in Wales more will have to be said when we come to relate the story of the prolonged and bitter campaign in favour of Disestablishment and Disendowment. At this point, the fact to be emphasised is that the vicious objection of fine men like Richard Lloyd to the Church was not that it was a recruiting office for the

Tory Party, but that it was, as they understood things, definitely unscriptural. Speaking about his schooldays, Mr. Lloyd George once said: "There were not half-a-dozen Church children in the school, but all the atmosphere and the government of the school were of the Church." Religious teaching occupied a very prominent place in the curriculum; and it implied not merely Bible knowledge, but the history of the English Church, the Creed, and the Catechism. Not unnaturally, Richard Lloyd viewed this situation with serious disapproval. He would fulminate against the iniquity of compelling children to declare that their names had been given them by their godfathers and their godmothers, when, in fact, they had never had godfathers or godmothers: further, that their names had been given to them at their baptism, when they, good Baptists as they were, had of course never had that rite exercised upon them. Still, the choice lay between repeating these meaningless phrases, or going without education of any sort or kind; for the educational monopoly enjoyed by the Church of England in the district was absolute.

Soon, however, these protests of his uncle, in which his mother would often share, began to find an echo in the mind of the now rapidly maturing boy. He had, when much younger, learnt the Catechism: indeed, he tells us himself that he was "especially strong in the Catechism, in which I usually got the first place". At last, however, the limit of compliance had been reached. One of the customs of the school was that on Ash Wednesday all the pupils, arrayed in their Sunday best, used to march in procession from the school to the parish church. For some years, Lloyd George was too young to have any thoughts save of obedience; but as he grew older, and began to ponder over the differences between church and chapel which loomed so large in the atmosphere of his home, he became filled

with resentment. Ever a man of action, he determined to absent himself from the service ; and as the procession was forming, he would climb over the playground wall and make off to the neighbouring woods. Another of the school customs, far more noxious than the former one, was to induce as many of the pupils as possible to present themselves for confirmation. It was the ambition of country clergymen, as well as of headmasters of Church schools, to impress the bishop on his annual visit with the large number of children desirous of being confirmed ; and it was only natural that some amount of pressure should be employed to secure a respectable contingent of recruits. Occasionally, clergymen and schoolmasters would go to scandalous lengths in their eagerness, not hesitating to employ bribery and coercion for the purpose. The father of the present writer, a Nonconformist minister, and the son of a Nonconformist minister, used to relate with a mixture of shame and glee how, as a boy in Carmarthenshire, he was given half a crown by the schoolmaster as a reward for allowing himself to be confirmed by the famous Bishop Thirlwall of St. David's. Nor were the joys of the bribe and the good things which it purchased altogether neutralised by the birching which he received at the hands of his horrified father when the tale had come to his ears !

Such evil practices were not resorted to at Llanystumdwy : there, persuasion was relied upon ; and there was no question of Richard Lloyd's nephew permitting himself to undergo the rite. Other " chapel boys ", however, seem to have been less scrupulous, much to the disgust of the young rebel now beginning to enjoy the pleasures of protestations.

On one occasion a fellow-pupil, arrayed in his best suit, was waiting to be led to the church for the confirmation ceremony. Lloyd George, however, exerted all his powers

to persuade him to play truant, promising him that if he did so, he himself would accompany him. Even then the silver tongue which, in years long after, Mr. Winston Churchill described as possessing eloquence enough to entice a bird from a tree, seems to have possessed potent persuasive properties, for the boy readily complied, and he and his tempter were soon espied by an astonished and angry schoolmaster climbing over the playground wall and making with all speed for the hills!

Lloyd George's youthful rebellion against ecclesiastical tyranny reached its most dramatic climax, however, on one of the occasions of the annual visit of the vicar, the local squire and the neighbouring gentry to the school for the purpose of listening to the children's recitations of the Creed and the Catechism. Morning dawned; and Lloyd George, who had lain awake for hours thinking over his plan of campaign, assembled all his fellow-scholars in the playground, and addressed them. He pointed out the unreasonableness of compelling chapel lads like themselves to utter words, many of which were meaningless to them, and some of which were palpably untrue. He suggested that, when bidden to recite the objectionable formulae, they should all remain dumb; and with that suggestion there was unanimous concurrence. When the expected moment arrived, and the assembled great ones were eagerly waiting for the childish chorus to begin, not a sound was heard. Again the master gave the command, and again only silence reigned. Unfortunately, however, for the promising cause of rebellion, the schoolmaster was much beloved of all his pupils; and on seeing the obvious looks of distress on his face, William George, younger brother of Lloyd George, felt his resolution giving way. "I believe," he began in a high piping voice; and then the other children chimed in, and the Creed was faultlessly recited from start to finish.

Only Lloyd George remained obdurate and dumb, as with flashing eyes he cast contemptuous glances at the associates who had not only betrayed him, their leader, but also the sacred cause for which they were fighting. The thrashing which he administered afterwards to his weak-kneed brother is remembered by the latter with terror down to this day. As for Lloyd George, he was deprived of the good-conduct prize which was to have come to him. But the rebellion had accomplished its object: never again were Nonconformist pupils asked to make public recital of Creed or Catechism at that school.

A boy of such marked promise as Lloyd George had proved himself to be would have been eagerly welcomed into the ministry of the Church. In those days practically the only door through which a poor boy in a village school could pass into the professions was that of a pupil-teacher-ship, leading afterwards to Holy orders; and schoolmasters and inspectors were always on the look-out for talented recruits. One of Lloyd George's contemporaries at Llanystumdwy school, a chapel boy like himself, ended his days as a much-respected canon. Another boy, son of a small farmer not far away, lived to be one of the best-known of Welsh bishops. For ordinary parents the temptation to advance their children in this, the only possible way, was very great. But needless to say, compliance never for a moment suggested itself to the sturdy character of Richard Lloyd. Better that "Davy" should make boots with his Nonconformist principles unsullied, than that he should force the gates of Lambeth Palace a renegade and a traitor to the faith of his fathers. Lloyd George himself always retained considerable contempt for those among his school-fellows who had bartered their religious convictions for worldly advancement; and he could sometimes give biting utterance to his feelings on the subject. On one occasion,

many years later, he was addressing a Disestablishment meeting in another part of Wales; and the Llanystumdwy boy who had become a canon was in the audience, and from time to time interrupting the speech. "I know who my interrupter is," cried Lloyd George; "he and I were chapel boys together at Llanystumdwy school. But he sold his convictions more cheaply than his mother used to sell pigs at Pwllheli fair." This shaft went home; and the minor dignity, who was suspected of being somewhat of a snob, instantly lapsed into a discomfited silence. Whether if Lloyd George had entered the Church he would have become a bishop, and if so, what sort of a bishop he would have made, are pretty problems for the ingenious persons who love to deal in the might-have-beens of history.



## CHAPTER TWO

### VILLAGE LIFE [1860-1880]

SO far we have been looking at the boy Lloyd George against the background of his home and his school ; but there are two other backgrounds perhaps of equal importance for the right understanding of the future man—the village and the chapel. Despite the assiduity with which he studied, it must not for a moment be supposed that Lloyd George was ever a recluse ; and in that respect, the report of his fellow-scholar, which has already been quoted, is perhaps misleading. Against the legend of Lloyd George as a bookworm, always wearing prematurely grave looks, and leading a life divided between school, chapel and study, there is overwhelming evidence. Nor would it, quite apart from the positive evidence available, have been easy to believe that the Premier who carried the colossal burden of Britain's fortunes in the Great War with such unbroken cheerfulness, could have been overwhelmed by the problems of schoolboy life.

Village life in the Llanystumdwy of the years 1860-1880 must have been pleasant on the whole. There was the old neighbourliness which existed, and still exists, in all genuine and unspoilt villages. Everybody knew everybody else ; and there was an all-pervading interest in a neighbour's affairs which served to weld the population into a real society.

Boys of Lloyd George's class in those days had to invent their own pastimes. Organised games did not exist. So

far as we know, neither football nor cricket was ever played. Boys relied perforce upon their own inventive resources; and that resulted in a much greater variety of recreations than is to be found in the more standardised communities of the present day. Many simple open-air games were played. And on the rare occasions when in that mild climate the ponds were frozen, there was skating. Richard Lloyd when a young lad had been an enthusiastic skater. On one occasion he had fallen and broken the bridge of his nose, a minor disfigurement which his benign and handsome face carried to the grave. Then, too, in spite of the savage Game Laws, or perhaps because of them, poaching was a pastime high in favour. In this illegal, but natural, pursuit, Lloyd George was an adept. His lifelong devotion to dogs had shown itself already; and since he did not possess one of his own, "Whig", a terrier belonging to a friend, and, later on, "Bismarck", the property of another friend, followed him devotedly wherever he went. There is ample evidence to support the view that, far from being a mere bookworm, with pale face and drooping walk, the young Lloyd George was an exceptionally healthy, active, and enterprising boy. Clad in knickerbockers (he and his brother were the only boys in the village who wore that aristocratic garment), and wearing a Glengarry cap on his head, he was always the leader of any particularly active and daring enterprise. Sometimes the boys would enact a congenial scene from contemporary history, particularly scenes from the Franco-Prussian War. Speaking at the old village in 1909, Lloyd George recalled one of these martial games: "We divided ourselves," he said, "into two parties—Frenchmen and Germans. The French entrenched themselves in the school porch; and there (pointing to a burly farmer in the audience) I see Napoleon!"

In the following reminiscence we can see the child who was father to the farmer of Churt: "Soon after this, when I was from five to ten years old, it was I that wheeled the barrow, did the manuring, planted the garden, and pruned the fruit trees; and I continued to do so until we left Llanystumdwy." A period of forty years ensued, during which Lloyd George was completely immersed in law and politics, finding his recreation in golf, motoring, and foreign travel. All the more interesting is it to find that, when for the first time since infancy he became master of his own time, after laying down the Premiership in 1922, he at once reverted to this hobby of his boyhood, and became an ardent cultivator of the soil.

"Socially," wrote Mr. Lloyd George many years afterwards, "when I was a boy, the village was completely under the yoke of the squire and the parson. The land was carefully guarded for game-preserving purposes; but that did not hinder us children from spending many a happy day in the woods, searching for nuts and sloes. When entering upon any such venture, we always used to set some of our companions to watch, lest some of the keepers should come upon us unawares. And we had good cause to fear the keeper. A widow was compelled to send her son away from home because he had killed a hare. If she had refused to do so, there is little doubt that she herself would have been evicted. No other farmer dared to take the boy; he left the village and, I believe, he shortly afterwards died." This, and countless other acts of petty tyranny, made an indelible impression upon the young boy, and roused in him that intense hatred of the squirearchy which was to play so big a part in his own subsequent legislature programme.

Sociable Lloyd George unquestionably was, then and always; nevertheless he liked sometimes to be alone. The

unknown possessed a great fascination for him. Needless to say he never went very far from his native village until on the threshold of man's estate; and it is doubtful whether he ever slept out of his own bed before his visit to Liverpool to sit for the first solicitor's examination. But he would frequently steal away on solitary journeys of discovery among the beautiful wooded hills and valleys of south Caernarvonshire. That was his way of satisfying a craving for travel and adventure. Geography always fascinated him. He longed to see the world; and his vivid imagination was fed with every travel book that he could lay his hands on.

The great libraries, with their offshoots in every village, did not then exist; but although the compass of Lloyd George's reading, when compared with that of an intelligent boy of to-day, was necessarily restricted, it is quite wrong to think of him as cut off from the pleasures of good literature. Richard Lloyd was always a keen student, and an omnivorous reader. Welsh books—particularly theology and poetry—came into the house in abundance. Nor was there any lack of English classics, in history, biography, travel, or fiction. It was then that Lloyd George laid the foundations of his exceptionally full and accurate knowledge of the great writers—Macaulay, Gibbon, Carlyle, Scott, Dickens, and many others—a knowledge which stood him in good stead in that middle period of life, when the labours and preoccupations of seventeen consecutive years of Cabinet office rendered it difficult for him to find much time for serious reading. As a good Nonconformist, tremendously interested in current religious questions, Richard Lloyd purchased practically all the periodicals published in Wales by the various denominations. And since he was almost as keenly interested in politics as in theology, he also took in one or two daily newspapers.

Lloyd George or his brother used to walk the four miles to Criccieth and back every evening to fetch the *Liverpool Mercury*. Until comparatively late in life, Lloyd George was always diffident of trying his hand at authorship ; but in his schooldays he was renowned for the skill with which he invented, and narrated, the adventures of imaginary personages. His tales of "Jack of Abyssinia"—a purely fictitious character—used to keep his audience spellbound.

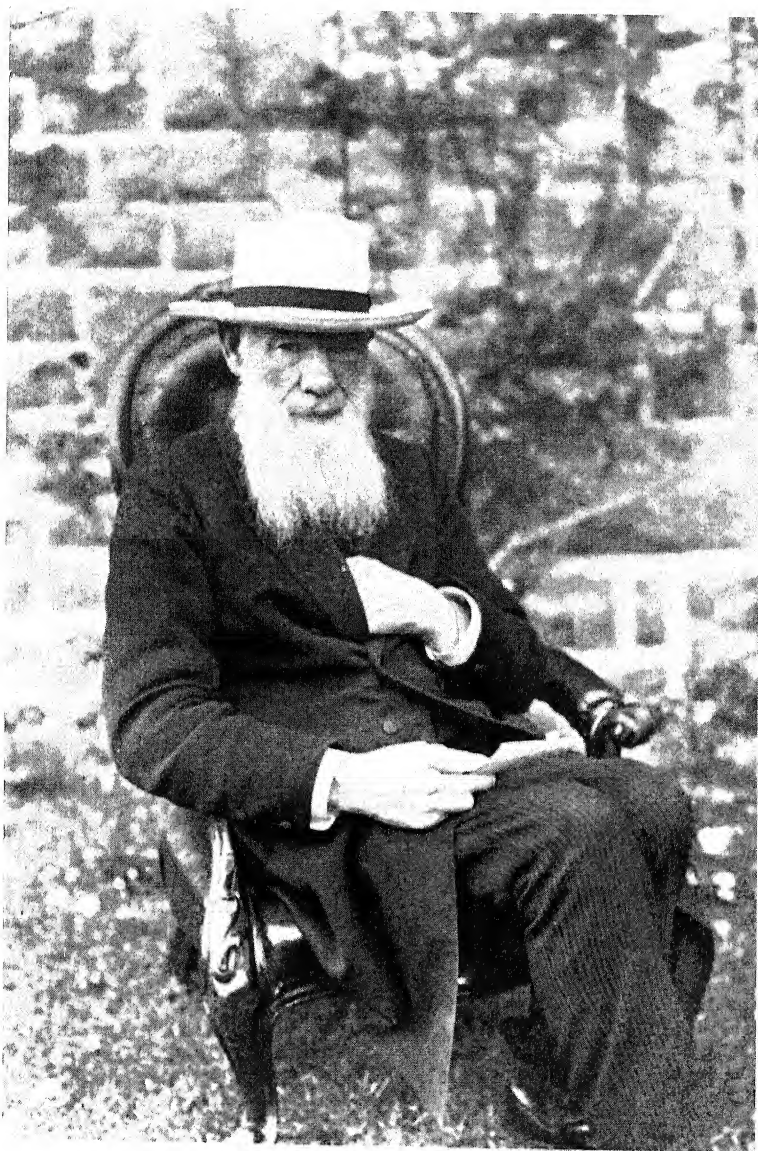
The real intellectual life of the village was not to be found in school, church, or chapel, but in the smithy, and the shoemaker's workshop. "Yonder smithy," declared Lloyd George when a Minister of the Crown, pointing with his finger to the old stone building almost completely covered with ivy, "was my first parliament, where night after night we discussed and decided all the abstruse questions relating to this world and the next, in politics, in theology, in philosophy, and in science. There was nothing too wide and comprehensive for us to discuss ; and we settled all the problems among ourselves without the slightest misgiving." The smith was a zealous Congregationalist, more interested in the niceties of denominational theology than in anything else. At that time practically the whole population of Llanystumdwy was divided between the two chapels—Calvinist Methodist and Independent—for, as we have seen, Richard Lloyd and his family were the only Baptists, and their place of worship was two miles away at Criccieth. Theological argument was apt to take the form of a debate about the scriptural warranty for the pet points of view of each denomination. Very early in life Lloyd George displayed a most remarkable dialectical skill ; and he could not have been brought up in Richard Lloyd's household without acquiring a true love of theology. "If I had not been particularly well

grounded in my subject," the old smith confided one day to Richard Lloyd, "your lad would certainly have succeeded in flooring me!"

But more important even than the smithy as a place where the keen minds of the village used to congregate was Richard Lloyd's workshop. Denominational theology was almost the only subject ever discussed at the smithy; but Richard Lloyd, though no less interested than his neighbours in denominational matters, was also keenly interested in other topics—in politics, in social questions, in literature, and in philosophy.

Of this village parliament Richard Lloyd was always Speaker. His extraordinary mental powers, his gift of eloquent and ready speech, his essential fairness, and his unfailing urbanity, made him, in fact, the uncrowned king of every assembly in which he found himself. And in days long after, when as the guest of his nephew in Downing Street he used to find himself pitted against some of the leading minds of the time, there was no obvious inferiority on the part of Richard Lloyd. On the contrary, he seemed to rise without effort to the full intellectual height of any company in which he happened to be placed, whether it was that of the village blacksmith and the village carpenter, or that of Asquith, Reading, Haldane, Winston Churchill and their fellows.

Every Monday evening the deacons and elders of the neighbouring churches, together with any other villagers who were interested in high themes, used to assemble round Richard Lloyd's bench. The sermons of the previous day would always be discussed; for in Wales, the sermon is an art, and the canons by which it is judged are far more artistic than theological. Then would come a keen discussion of the theological implications of the telling phrases and memorable illustrations quoted. From theology



*George Boardman,  
Manchester.*

MR. RICHARD LLOYD.

the transition to politics was an easy one ; for in Wales at that time, the one great political issue was liberty—liberty of the tenant against squircarchical tyranny, and of the Nonconformist against the tyranny of the Established Church. Those were days in which our newspapers still dealt faithfully, and at enormous length, with the utterances of Front Bench politicians. Every word uttered by such leaders as Gladstone, Disraeli, Salisbury, and Bright, in Parliament and outside Parliament, was reported. And not only were their speeches reported, they were also read ! A week seldom went by without Richard Lloyd's reading in his melodious voice to his assembled guests some stirring utterance of Gladstone calling upon the electors to put conscience before interest ; or of Chamberlain's inciting the poor man to rise and make an end of the people who toiled not neither did they spin. At all such debates Lloyd George would be present, at first a silent listener, but from the age of twelve or thereabout a keen and frequent participant. By such incessant practice his natural gift of speech was cultivated and disciplined, while the foundation of his knowledge of contemporary politics was securely laid. It was the chapel, however, which made him what, in the strict sense of the term, we should call a public speaker.

On a previous page mention has been made of the part played by the " Little Bethels " of Wales, notably in the religious, but even more perhaps in the cultural, life of the community. Apart from the sermon, which habituated the listeners to first-rate oratory, the three instruments of culture associated with the chapel were the Sunday school, the Literary Meeting, and the Society (commonly known as the *Setet*). In England a Sunday school is a place in which children are taught religious knowledge. It does not fail to be that in Wales, of course ; but far more is it a



place in which adults meet together, formed in classes under an elected leader, for the purpose of studying some portion of the Bible, or some branch of theology or philosophy. In fact, it is the "seminar" which has since proved so fruitful a part of the technique of the Workers' Educational Association. Its essence is that there should be a small group, ranging in numbers from six to a dozen, the so-called "teacher" being one of themselves, meeting once a week, not to be taught in the ordinary sense of the term, but to discuss.

The young Welshman of to-day, and even more so the foreigner, finds it a little difficult to understand the enormously big place which the chapel filled in the life of Wales during the greater part of the nineteenth century. To-day there are many competing institutions—the school, the college, the club, and the library; but in the days when Lloyd George was a boy, the chapel stood alone without a rival. In the pulpit the artistic soul of Wales found its full, and, indeed, about its only, expression. The poetry of Wales (if we except its hymns), good as much of it is, never even approaches the very best. Its painting and its sculpture are almost non-existent. Even in music Wales has not given to the world anything of real distinction or of abiding worth. But between 1780 and 1914 it produced successive generations of preachers who brought pulpit oratory to a point that has never been surpassed, even if it has been equalled, by any other nation before or since. Until quite recently Wales has had no drama, and yet the people are actors to their finger-tips. The truth is that their love of the dramatic found full scope in the pulpit; for the sermons which won fame in Wales were simply dramatic monologues, delivered with every perfect device of voice and gesture. The accounts which we possess, written by eyewitnesses, of some of the effects produced

by the past preachers, make marvellous reading. In the hands of a John Elias, a John Jones Talsarn, a Henry Rees, or a Herber Evans, the vast congregation of five or six thousand people, standing before them in an uncovered field throughout the whole length of a summer's day, would be as clay in the hands of the potter. From tears to laughter, from ecstatic joy to the most poignant sorrow and the most acute terror, it would be moved by a word or even a gesture. So realistic and dramatic was the preaching of John Elias that, on one occasion when he was describing the Almighty letting the arrow fly from his bow, the whole audience instinctively parted in two to allow passage for the shaft. So forceful was the voice of Owen Thomas that, preaching at Bangor, his accents could be distinctly heard in Anglesey across the Menai Straits. Needless to say, scenes of the most uncontrolled enthusiasm were often witnessed, for "revivalism" was never far from the great preaching meetings of Wales. Hundreds would literally swoon from terror as John Elias described the great Day of Judgment. Hundreds more would leap and shout in triumph as John Jones extolled the mercy of God in Christ. Even to-day, when oratory has sadly degenerated, and when there are so many competing attractions, there is nothing that a Welshman loves more than a preaching meeting. Several thousands of people will come together to the village green on one of these occasions. At ten o'clock two sermons, each at least an hour in length, will be delivered. In the afternoon two more will be heard. The day closes with yet another two; and the multitude will then disperse over moor and hill to the scattered farms and hamlets, discussing the great oratorical feats to which they have listened, quoting and criticising with discrimination, and singing for the twentieth time that day some favourite hymn.

People who discuss the religious value of these great preaching festivals are completely missing the point: their real value was cultural, and as such it must be measured. Putting it at its very lowest, appreciation of preaching as an art is a vastly better thing than fox-hunting, or greyhound-racing, or boxing. It does show the kind of mental cultivation which led the Greeks of old to the Athenian market place to listen to the orations of their finest speakers; being, in all probability, far more keenly interested in the artistic display than in the actual soundness of the policy advocated or attacked. The indisputable fact that the Welsh peasant, and the small Welsh shopkeeper, of fifty years ago was intellectually so vastly superior to men of the same class in England, is to be attributed almost wholly to the cultural influence of pulpit and Sunday school combined.

No man has ever loved and admired the Welsh pulpit more heartily than Mr. Lloyd George. Even in his busiest days, as Chancellor of the Exchequer and as Prime Minister, he would drive scores of miles to listen to one of the great preachers. The biographies of the pulpit giants of the nineteenth century have always constituted some of his favourite reading. Visitors to Downing Street, in the years when he was in residence there, will not have forgotten that a portrait of John Jones Talsarn used to hang over the dining-room mantelpiece. Furthermore, it is easy for anyone who is in the least familiar with the Welsh preaching tradition to perceive that Lloyd George has moulded his own style of platform oratory upon it. There is the same modulation of a naturally beautiful voice, the same lavish use of gesture, the same passion, with its intermingling of humour and pathos, the same love of telling illustration, and the same skill in exploiting to the full the dramatic possibilities of the theme. Before his day

Wales had heard oratory of this quality devoted to the cause of religion; but it had never heard it dedicated to the service of politics. The Anglican squires who represented Wales in Parliament down to about 1886 were poor enough speakers in English; while in Welsh they were completely dumb. It was the supreme distinction of Lloyd George, and the key to his phenomenal success as a platform speaker, that he took this polished weapon from the armoury of the pulpit, and with it proceeded to storm the ramparts of political and social abuses.

In the chapel, and in the federation of chapels, the Welshman learnt the difficult art of self-government. The rule of the parson had been an autocratic one; that of the Nonconformist bodies was, from the first, democratic. Every official, including the minister himself, was chosen by a direct vote of the whole congregation. Even in a further, and a different, sense Welsh Nonconformity was democratic: its members were almost wholly drawn from the middle and lower classes; and its ministers, until well advanced in life, were simple workmen—John Elias a weaver, Christmas Evans a farm labourer, John Jones a quarryman, Williams of Wern a carpenter. The doors of the universities were closed against them; and Owen Glyndwr's University of Wales was still an unrealised dream. They were the poor preachers of a poor people. As late as 1850 a salary of £10 a year was considered adequate for a Welsh minister; and it may be considered doubtful whether the most famous preachers that Wales has produced ever earned as much as £200 a year, when for several months in the year they preached not only on Sundays, but on most other days of the week as well. The result of it all was that the Welshman, hitherto so careless and docile in his politics, became thoughtful and independent, having accustomed himself to government by

discussions and voting in his chapel. He had learned to read and to think in the Sunday school; and it was not long before he added to his Bible and his commentary a newspaper and a literary and political magazine. Every chapel had its literary society; and by that means new ideas in poetry, music, philosophy, were slowly disseminated among the people. The great awakening, and the period of probation, were over by the time that Lloyd George was ready to leave the village school; it was for him, if he could, to put himself at the head of a thoughtful people, burning with a sense of grievance, and waiting only for expert and dynamic leadership.

Even if he had not been Richard Lloyd's adopted son, Lloyd George would have had much to do with the chapel, for every Nonconformist boy in those days had. But the fact that his uncle was pastor of the Baptist Brotherhood at Criccieth no doubt emphasised the duty. Of compulsion there never seems to have been a trace: with perfect willingness Lloyd George walked the two miles into Criccieth and back again three times every Sunday, as well as to the week-night service on Wednesdays. Nor was he, when adolescence had been reached, a merely passive member. It is part of the splendid tradition of these small village congregations that every member, young or old, male or female, shall play an active part, according to their ability, in the carrying on of affairs. There were two things that young Lloyd George could do—he could speak and he could lead the singing; and very soon we find him helping the cause in both ways.

His brother, in the beautiful tribute which he recently wrote to the memory of Richard Lloyd, says: "It is as a statesman, no doubt, that my brother is best known to the present generation. But as he himself has more than once publicly declared, it was in the 'Little Bethel' of



Pen-y-Maes that he began his public career; and before he had gone out much into the world—in other words, when the influence of home was greatest and most direct—religious affairs were what chiefly interested him. He was baptised when only twelve years old, and until he was drawn into the whirlpool of St. Stephen's he was active as a member of the Church of the Disciples of Christ; and he has ever since remained a member of it. In addition to the Sunday services, he also regularly attended the mid-week *Selet*, and the notes of several of his speeches there are still extant. It sometimes fell to his lot to 'begin the singing', and at the Sunday afternoon singing meeting he was the authority on the number of every hymn and tune in the book. On occasions also he conducted services in neighbouring churches."

Richard Lloyd was in the habit of keeping a brief diary, and its entries during those years contain frequent references to his nephew's religious activities. Here are a few of them: "To-day David George's 18th birthday. Feel that if he makes as good progress in the next eighteen, he will, by God's grace, be successful, useful, and happy. May he have the honest and manly wisdom to bring all things—knowledge, opportunities, abilities, etc., under subjection to his calling, and his calling in all things under allegiance to Christ, His service, and His people." Again: "Wednesday night. David read well. He has attained naturalness of voice, and expression better than ever. The singing also led by him, correct and lively. Oh! that he may have many days to serve the sacred things of God's House." "Excellent meeting. D. Ll. G. speaking for the first time.—O, my dear boy, he did speak well! There was never anything more striking and useful." "D. Ll. G. continuing his lessons on the story of Samson—most striking and appropriate—very

good points—unity of thought—and excellent delivery indeed.” “Chapel. Good meeting—D. L. G. excellently—a little practice, and a little more spirited delivery, and he will make a fine speaker—pluck and perseverance, that’s all—— If only he possessed one ounce of J. or Edward’s overweight of confidence.” These are typical of the entries with which the diary is strewn, proving not only the young Lloyd George’s diligence in all matters pertaining to the chapel, but also his uncle’s touching solicitude on his behalf; and the joy with which he watched the unfolding of the boy’s genius. It would not be easy to overrate the value, for a young man embarking upon a legal and political career, of this regular practice in public speaking under the loving, but most critical, eye of his uncle.



## CHAPTER THREE

### THE YOUNG LAWYER [1877-1888]

WHEN Lloyd George had reached his fourteenth year the problem of his future became an urgent one. Further schooling was out of the question ; for the county schools which now make it possible for every village lad in Wales, however poor, to continue his studies up to the age of eighteen or so, and indeed after that at the university, still belonged to a future twenty years distant. Manual labour was ruled out ; for the boy had shown such an aptitude for study, and the family as a whole were endued with so much ambition, that it appears to have been taken for granted that one of the professions would be his goal. Let it not be forgotten that his father had been a schoolmaster, and that his uncle was a shoemaker for the sole reason that the branch of the Christian Church to which he belonged did not believe in a paid ministry.

We have already observed that the path leading to the teaching profession would have been an easy one for Lloyd George if only he had been willing to abjure his Nonconformist principles. Again and again his friend the village schoolmaster put before the family the proposal that he should become a pupil-teacher, and subsequently follow the normal course of Training College study leading eventually to the mastership of a National School. Not for one moment, however, would mother, uncle, or boy entertain the proposal, for their Nonconformity was

no mere inherited pose, but a conviction for which they would all have been willing to suffer any privations.

The profession which, above all others, might have been expected to appeal most powerfully to a boy endowed as Lloyd George was with ability and eloquence, and born in a Nonconformist home in the third quarter of the nineteenth century, was the ministry. No other calling possessed anything like the same glamour in the Wales of that period. The names of the great preachers were household words throughout the Principality. Portraits of them hung on every cottage wall. Their smart sayings were quoted. Many of their sermons were universally known, and were referred to in conversation, as "the sermon of the Tree Planting", "the sermon of Balaam's Ass", "the sermon of the Trench Digging", "the sermon of Jacob's Ladder", and so on; and the authorship of each famous piece of eloquence was as well known as is that of *David Copperfield*, or *Hamlet*, or *The English Mail Coach*. Quite apart from any idea of doing good and wielding great power in a noble cause, the ministry as a profession had more attraction than any other for a boy avid of fame and importance in the public eye. Nor was there one single qualification for the role of great preacher which Lloyd George did not possess. We cannot doubt that had he entered the ministry he would soon have stepped into its front ranks, and by now have his name inscribed on the roll of immortals, with Daniel Rowland, Howel Harris, John Elias, John Jones, Herber Evans, Thomas Charles Edwards, and John Williams. There was, however, one insuperable obstacle: as we have seen, the Disciples of Christ had no paid ministry; and to turn Methodist or Congregationalist for purely professional reasons would have seemed to Lloyd George wellnigh as repugnant as joining the Church of England. Had he been born into one of those

other denominations, there can be no reasonable doubt that the pulpit would have been the sphere of his life work.

Only two other professions held for him even a remote possibility—the medical, and the legal. Richard Lloyd would have liked his nephew to become a doctor; but the boy himself was never attracted by that calling, and consequently it was not seriously considered. The uncle never seems to have departed from the sensible course of tendering advice, but after tendering it, allowing the boy the most perfect freedom to follow his own bent. There remained the legal profession, and upon it the ultimate choice fell. There was much to recommend it; for one thing, no further school or college would be necessary: the work of preparation for the first examination could be proceeded with at home, and after that, the boy could be articled to some local solicitor. Then also it appealed to that pugnacity which has always been so pronounced an ingredient in Lloyd George's character. Richard Lloyd favoured the plan; for would it not enable Davy, some day, to be the poor man's champion against the blatant class bias of the territorial magnates, who in those days almost monopolised the magisterial bench. Mrs. George had the highest esteem for lawyers generally, springing from the gratitude which she felt towards a Liverpool solicitor who had been for her a tower of strength in the early years of her widowhood. It is obvious that the Bar would have suited Lloyd George best; for his persuasive eloquence, his quick-working mind, his marvellous capacity for mastering rapidly a complicated case and seeing into the very heart of it, his unfailing tact and humour, could hardly have failed to raise him to the top of the profession. But the cost was prohibitive; and even if he had succeeded in getting "called", he had no financial resources wherewith to face the first lean years, which even the most

brilliant barrister is compelled to pass through. Later on Lloyd George felt the pity of it; for when he had become immersed in politics, as Member for Caernarvon Boroughs, he found himself unable to attend to his practice at Portmadoc. As a barrister, he would have experienced no difficulty in being politician as well.

Even in his romantic career there are few episodes so romantic as Lloyd George's preparation for, and triumphant passing of, the Preliminary Law Examination. The lad had just turned thirteen. In the usual subjects taught at a village school he was well grounded; and in the "continuation class" he had learnt a little Latin. But of French he knew not a word, nor did the schoolmaster himself; and both Latin and French were compulsory subjects in the examination. The position was complicated owing to the notable diffidence of the family; for they did not want their neighbours to know about the perhaps unduly ambitious project until success had been achieved. Profound secrecy, then, had to be preserved, and no aid outside the family circle could be invoked. Undaunted, Richard Lloyd took matters into his own hands. Second-hand Latin and French grammars and text-books were obtained; and uncle and nephew sat down to learn the languages together. Such bravery and perseverance, one is glad to know, received their reward. Again unknown to their neighbours, Richard Lloyd and his nephew journeyed to Liverpool for the examination; and a few days later the grand news arrived that the boy had been successful. He was not yet fourteen. The Llanystumdwy villagers showed no resentment at having been kept in the dark so long; their respect and liking for the boy and his family were far too great to allow of any such feeling obtruding itself. On the contrary, there was rejoicing among all the neighbours.

The next step was to find a good firm of solicitors who would permit the young novice to continue his reading with them prior to being articled. In this matter again luck was on the side of Lloyd George; for he was taken by one of the most reputable firms in North Wales—that of Breese, Jones and Casson of Portmadoc, a small town some six miles from Llanystumdwy. Mr. Breese, the senior partner, was Clerk of the Peace, and Clerk of the Lieutenancy of the County of Merioneth. Moreover (and this was perhaps a fact of even greater importance as things turned out) he was a Liberal, and one who took an active part in the electioneering contests of the district. In 1879, when he was sixteen years of age, Lloyd George was articled to Mr. Casson, the junior partner. "Mark that lad," declared Mr. Breese at the time; "some day he will be one of the leading men in the land. I have never known anyone who can master a thing so quickly as he can."

Lloyd George, now properly entered upon a legal career, and with adequate opportunities for learning the theory and practice of his profession, threw himself into the work with all the impetuosity which has always characterised his efforts. He had now left home, and was lodging with a kindly old couple at Portmadoc, returning to Llanystumdwy, however, every week-end. There was good reason why he should work hard; for every penny which Richard Lloyd and his mother had been able to scrape together had been dispersed on the examination and the subsequent articles. Obviously he would have to earn his living as quickly as possible. Until his Final Examination had been passed in 1884, and he had been admitted as a solicitor, he remained in the office at Portmadoc. The whole of his time, however, was by no means devoted to the law: politics, journalism, and religious activities also claimed a

good share of his energies. But of his political activities during this period more will be said in another place.

Having become a qualified solicitor, the further question of his immediate future had to be considered. Mr. Breese had died in 1881. "He was a kind master, a thorough man, a man capacitated for great things, obstructed in their attainment by ill health, and finally cut off by death, and that prematurely." That is how Lloyd George paid his tribute to the memory of one to whom he owed much. By that time Richard Lloyd and his family had moved from Llanystumdwy to Criccieth, having rented there a small house below the hill on which stand the ruins of the old castle. The Portmadoc firm suggested that a branch should be opened at Criccieth, with Lloyd George in charge of it. After some misgivings the offer was accepted. But for some reason which is not clear the arrangement never seems to have worked smoothly, and before long Mr. Casson suggested that it should be abandoned, and that the young lawyer should become their clerk in one of their best Merionethshire branches. Financially it was a good offer, and its acceptance would have relieved him of the terrible anxiety and insecurity which now hung like a dark cloud over his professional prospects. For every penny had by now been spent: he was unable to afford even the few pounds required for the purchase of professional robes; and Criccieth was far too small a place to provide a living for a solicitor. But Lloyd George had two strong objections to taking the safe and easy course: the first was that he would be only a paid assistant, instead of being, as he was determined to be, his own master; and the second was that the office to which it was proposed to transfer him was a Tory one, and he feared that its political atmosphere would prove a hindrance to the political work which he was now hankering after. With the full approval

of his mother and his uncle, the offer was rejected. It was only natural that the firm should feel some little annoyance at the refusal, by a poor lad without prospects of any sort, and with nothing to trust in save his own abilities, of their extremely advantageous proposal; and, unfortunately, relations became from that moment somewhat embittered. The consequence was that Lloyd George decided to throw discretion to the wind, and to build a practice for himself as best he could. Without delay the little back parlour of the new home at Criccieth was rigged out as an office, while to the front door was nailed a brass plate bearing the inscription: "D. Lloyd George, Solicitor." The situation was rendered all the more delicate by the fact that his younger brother—William George—who had followed closely in his footsteps, was still an articled clerk of Mr. Casson's. Credit is reflected by the sequel upon all parties concerned. William suggested that it would perhaps be advisable for him to transfer his articles to his brother. But Mr. Casson replied that he and his partner would on no account surrender him, since they felt the most perfect confidence that he would betray none of their professional secrets. With them, accordingly, he remained until he had passed his Final; after which he entered into partnership with his brother.

To build a practice out of nothing, in a poor Welsh village with a population of about a thousand, was a task so beset with difficulties that any man not endowed with an extraordinary amount of courage and self-confidence would have shrunk from attempting it. But neither courage nor self-confidence were ingredients ever lacking in Lloyd George's character. Not only was Criccieth itself a small place, whose legal requirements could easily have been served by a half-day spent once a week by a neighbouring solicitor, but the whole region of south Caernarvonshire

was sparsely peopled by small farmers and cottagers. Of towns in the ordinary sense of the term there were none in the vicinity; for Pwllheli and Portmadoc were little better than big villages, despite their antiquity. Obviously, not one of these places could, of itself, be made to support a solicitor; and the profession was already well represented in the district by ancient and reputable firms. The only hope lay in establishing several branches. With an office at Criccieth, another at Portmadoc, a third at Pwllheli, and a fourth at Ffestiniog, something might be accomplished. But how was one man, who could not afford to pay a qualified, or even an unqualified, clerk, to run a practice of that type? It is at this point that Lloyd George's guardian angel, the old uncle, once again enters the picture. Just as he had given his nephew a first-rate home when left an orphan, just as he had learned Latin and French in order to be his tutor, so now he set himself to master the daily routine of a solicitor's office, in order to act, in effect, as managing clerk. The plan was for Richard Lloyd to keep watch at the Criccieth office, while Lloyd George did the round of the other branches every day. He interviewed clients, took down their stories, collected witnesses and made a note of their evidence, and by degrees came to take upon his shoulders much of the work entailed in the preparation of cases. Relieved of that burden, Lloyd George was able to devote all his time to advocacy, and to the ever-growing volume of miscellaneous, political and religious speaking which now devolved upon him. Richard Lloyd was never, of course, a trained lawyer; and in the legal profession there is a great deal which only the technically skilled practitioner can deal with. Nevertheless, it is wonderful what a fine mind can do, even without technical training, when presented with even difficult legal problems. One remembers, for example, the unerring



skill with which Dr. Johnson used to go straight to the heart of the legal conundrums which his friend Boswell had the habit of sending to him from time to time. And in his mental grasp, his all-round erudition, and his lucidity of expression (though assuredly not in his ill-mannered brusqueness!) there was something Johnsonian about Richard Lloyd.

Here again a few extracts from Richard Lloyd's diary may be quoted; for they shed a powerful ray of light upon this little-known, but all-important, phase of Lloyd George's life:

"16th. Pentrefelin County Court. D. Ll. G. making his debut.—Allanson against him—victorious on every point—a very complicated case and most unmanageable parties—he can hardly meet more critical circumstances during a long career, if spared, than this, of its kind. Had another case offered him in Court, R. E. Harlech, and succeeded in both." "8th. Wet again. D. Ll. G. waited until the 11 o'clock train in order to interview J. O. and R. O. He advised the former not to send him on his behalf to Caernarvon with such a case.—Much trouble in persuading him that to give the best advice is a lawyer's duty, not to go to law." "D. Ll. G. off to Ffestiniog—his first day of attendance in his professional capacity—got several cases there and at Penrhyn—name not placed on window a drawback I believe—home by 8 train—several callers—W. G. home by 6.10 train—proud of him—Mr. Thomas kind to him—gave him a half-crown dinner at Chester—Fear that D. Ll. G.'s drifting has proved an obstacle to W. G. in the Exam." "30th. A day of heavy anxiety—expecting result of W. G.'s Intermediate—the lads reaching home by the 5.10 train having had good news at 4.10. The two going to the Debating Society in the evening, and W. G.

making the best (first too) speech of the evening—D. Ll. G. appeared for the first time in Portmadoc Magistrates Court for people from the neighbourhood of Garn. Won with praise, and promised every case from there before long." And so the laconic record proceeds from day to day, revealing in every entry Richard Lloyd's love and care for the two lads that he had started on a professional career, as well as his own wideawake interest in the work which they were doing.

On many occasions Richard Lloyd was something much more than a keeper of records for the firm; he was (as Mr. William George puts it in the memoir) the Moltke who planned the victory in many a hardfought case. At a much later date, when Mr. Lloyd George was Chancellor of the Exchequer, and had long ceased to practise, a case with a political flavour came to the firm from Barmouth. At one of the heated Liberal meetings held during the "Budget Election" of 1910, a local minister had shouted at a man who was a frequent interrupter of the speeches, the words: "You have been bought." Whereupon the Conservative lady who was supposed to have done the "buying", caused a slander action to be brought. The case was heard at the Chester Assizes, F. E. Smith, K.C., and Ralph Bankes appearing for the plaintiff, and Abel Thomas, K.C., and Ellis Griffiths for the defendant. When issue had been joined, it appeared that the whole case would turn upon the meaning of the word "bought". Did it necessarily imply a monetary transaction (in which case the utterance would be tantamount to an accusation of bribery) or was it merely a figurative expression? Richard Lloyd had carefully collected evidence of the many popular senses in which the Welsh word for "to buy" was used; and his report ended with the well-known saying of Isaiah: "Come buy and eat, buy wine and milk

without money and without price." The argument thus supplied convinced even an English jury, and they found for the defendant.

Meanwhile, his base of operations at Criccieth so competently guarded, Lloyd George himself went hither and thither over a wide area in Caernarvonshire and Merionethshire practising the advocate's art in every sort of lower court—Petty Sessions, Quarter Sessions and County Courts. With clients he soon became immensely popular; for he always knew his brief, and he possessed the two invaluable qualities in an advocate—audacity which nothing could daunt, and alertness of mind which nothing could ever surprise. But for a long time he was the *bête noire* of County Justices, who had always been accustomed to a good deal of deference on the part of solicitors, notwithstanding their manifold bias in favour of all matters pertaining to the gentry and their rights. It was something unpleasantly new for them to be confronted by a young man who cared not a straw for the gentry or their rights, and whose bias was clearly in favour of the under-dog. For some time relations were far from cordial; and what the newspapers call "scenes in court" were of frequent occurrence. An account of one or two of these "scenes" is worth giving; shedding, as they do, much light upon the methods and the manner of the young advocate.

Poaching was, perhaps, in those days the most frequent offence in rural Wales; and in the eyes of the local magistrates, no offence could be more heinous. It was notorious that they were willing to convict for a breach of the Game Laws on the most flimsy evidence. Four quarrymen were, on one occasion, charged with having unlawfully fished in Nantlle Lake; and they retained Lloyd George for their defence. The ingenious defence put forward was that a

lake is not a "river" within the meaning of the Act. "That," remarked the chairman, "is a question that will be decided in a superior court." "Yes," retorted Lloyd George, "and it will be a perfectly just and unbiassed court, too." The innuendo struck home; and the chairman, springing to his feet, with wrathful voice shouted: "If that remark of Mr. Lloyd George is meant as a reflection upon any magistrate sitting upon this Bench, I hope he will name him. A more insulting remark to the Bench I have never heard during the whole course of my experience as a magistrate." "But a more true remark," replied Lloyd George, quite unperturbed by the storm which he had raised, "was never made in Court." "Tell me," demanded the chairman, getting more and more angry, "to whom you are referring?" In calm and level tones came the chilling reply: "I was referring in particular to you, sir." Every attempt on the part of the magistrates to induce him to withdraw the offensive remark completely failed; and when a fellow-solicitor added his entreaties to theirs, he only elicited from Lloyd George the scathing remark: "I congratulate the Bench on the servility of the Bar." Victory, as usual, rested with the rebel; for after retiring for private consultation, the magistrates decided to waive the matter of an apology, and to go on with the case. It was fear, most probably, and not magnanimity, that led them to dismiss the case against two of the prisoners and to fine the other two a shilling each.

Sometimes, however, Lloyd George relied upon his ready wit; and then, as in after years in the House of Commons, it brought him, in the long run, a richer reward than did the fierce invective in which he was, in those early days, too prone to indulge. For much as they may admire his audacity, clients will not entrust their cases to

an advocate who is notorious for falling foul of the Bench. An example of his better manner comes from the Merionethshire Sessions, then presided over by Samuel Pope, Q.C., a most distinguished leader of the Parliamentary Bar. It appears that Lloyd George was laying down certain disputable legal propositions with more assurance than befits a young advocate. "No, no," interposed Mr. Pope, "this won't do. Mr. Lloyd George is laying down the law as if he were a Judge in the Court of Appeal. It is necessary for me to point out that we here do not believe in the infallibility of Mr. Lloyd George." Quick as lightning came the reply: "Neither do we in these parts believe in the infallibility of a Pope." The Court dissolved in laughter, in which Mr. Pope himself led the way; and the atmosphere was cleared of the thunderclouds which had previously been gathering so thick and heavy.

With County Court Judges—men who had no special interest in upholding the Game Laws, nor in punishing poor folk for either attending a chapel or being members of the Liberal Party—Mr. Lloyd George's relations were always excellent. And he was particularly fortunate in the fact that, just as he was entering upon his career as advocate, there should come to the district as County Court Judge Sir David Brynmor Jones, a keen Welshman as well as a sound lawyer, and also a Liberal, who was to be Lloyd George's colleague in the House of Commons for many years. Sir David has himself recounted his first encounter with the future Prime Minister. "On my first visit," he writes, "I tried a few defended cases in which solicitors were engaged. In one there appeared a particularly boyish-looking advocate, thin and rather pale. I was attracted by his youthful appearance and his taking voice, as well as by a certain earnest, eager, but yet restrained manner, and remember noticing, as the hearing proceeded,

that his way of handling his case was in strong contrast with the inexperience which might be presumed from his youthfulness. A point of law arose; he was ready with his authorities. He asked no dangerous questions in cross-examination. He stuck to relevant points. He made no attempt at eloquence in his speech. I gave judgment for his client on quite sound, but rather technical grounds; and I recollect the humour (I see the papers call it now the 'merry twinkle') in his eyes when he asked for costs and got them."

Much the most famous of Lloyd George's law cases was the Llanfrothen Burial Case. It is an important milestone in his career, as it forms a bridge between his purely legal work and politics; and because it made him the hero, not only of a small district, but of Wales as a whole. As he himself has testified: "By the time the struggle had come to an end, my name was known all over the Principality." The case is so full of drama, and provides such an insight into that vanished world of Church and Chapel antagonism, that it is well worth relating in some detail.

The original dispute was undoubtedly a product of the intensely bitter relationships which existed between Episcopalians and Nonconformists in the Wales of the last quarter of the nineteenth century. On the one side we see the Establishment, with its back to the wall, fighting desperately for the retention of all its privileges, despite the fact that not one Welshman in a dozen acknowledged any obligation to it; and on the other side, the once despised and oppressed Nonconformist bodies, now conscious of their strength, and fully determined to win for themselves complete religious equality. Among the most bitter subjects of dispute was the absolute right claimed by the incumbent of the parish over the churchyard; for since in the vast majority of Welsh villages no burial ground

existed except that of the church, the claim amounted to a veto upon all Nonconformist services at the graveside. To remedy this shocking grievance the Burials Act of 1880 was passed, giving to Nonconformists the legal right to conduct their own services at funerals, even in the churchyards.

Llanfrothen is a little slate-mining village, lying in a beautiful valley between the towering heights of Moelwyn and Cnicht, midway between Ffestiniog and Beddgelert. In 1864 an enlargement of the old parish churchyard had been made by the gift of an adjoining piece of land by a Mr. and Mrs. Owen, of Dolgelley. This gift had not been by deed, but no one disputed its validity. The old wall had been taken down, and a new one enclosing the additional ground was built by the parishioners as a whole. Burials took place for years in the new ground as a matter of course. There was abundant evidence that the new ground was considered to be merged in the old to constitute one churchyard. Down to 1880, burials of course took place only with the ministrations of the Established Church. It was the Burials Act of that year which made the difference, for the rector of the parish seems to have regarded it, not as an act of justice towards three-quarters of the villagers, but as an unjustifiable attack upon the rights of the Church; and from that moment he cast about for some loophole by which to escape from the clear injunctions of the law. The plan which he thought of was to induce Mrs. Owen to execute a deed of conveyance making over the new ground to the rector in trust for the parishioners, with the condition that no one was to be buried there save with the rites of the Church of England. To the rector, this plan seemed to be both ingenious and legally sound—a restrictive covenant which would protect the churchyard, even in the face of an Act of Parliament, against the unwelcome intrusions of Nonconformist divines.

For the next seven years the rector's pretty plot seems to have worked smoothly; for no one in the village had the courage to challenge the validity of the deed. But in 1888 the issue was raised in an acute and dramatic form. An old quarryman, Robert Roberts by name, had died, expressing with his last breath a desire to be laid to rest in the new burial ground beside his daughter, who already lay there, and to have the service performed by his own minister, a Calvinistic Methodist. The minister had already left home for London, on his way to a Mediterranean cruise; but as soon as tidings reached him of Robert Roberts' death, he hurried back, and persuaded the mourning family to claim their rights under the Burials Act. Meanwhile, the rector seems to have been lulled into false security by his knowledge of the fact that the minister had gone abroad, for he permitted the grave to be dug. It was when matters had progressed thus far that he was served with a notice under the Burials Act, and informed that the minister would officiate at the graveside. Baffled and circumvented in this manner, the rector was greatly incensed, and at once proceeded in person to the churchyard, accompanied by the sexton, and filled in the newly-prepared grave. He even went the length of having a police constable stationed in the churchyard, with the object of intimidating the relations of the dead man.

Whatever might have happened had the rector behaved more tactfully and feelingly, this brutal conduct simply had the effect of making the relations and the minister more than ever determined to insist upon their legal rights. Without losing a moment, the minister borrowed a horse and rode to Portmadoc, to take counsel with Lloyd George. The young lawyer's advice was emphatic: "Go on, and carry the matter through. I will defend you." This arranged, the minister returned to Llanfrothen and at once



took steps to have the funeral proceeded with. The gate of the churchyard was locked; nor could the rector be induced to surrender the key. After some difficulty a gravedigger was procured, and the bricks and mortar were hoisted over the churchyard wall. Let the rest of the story be told in the minister's own words :

"A bier was borrowed from the local Baptist Chapel, and in the great concourse of people who had come together from far and near, there were found scores of stalwarts who readily carried the corpse over the distance of three miles which lay between the house of the deceased man and the churchyard at Llanfrothen. By the time the funeral reached the churchyard, the locked gate had been forced open, and the mortal remains of the quarryman were quietly and solemnly laid to rest in the manner which he had so ardently desired."

The sequel took the form of an action, brought by the rector and his co-trustees in the County Court against eight defendants, "for wrongly entering the plaintiffs' land, digging a grave therein, burying a corpse, and conducting a funeral service". Lloyd George, as he had promised, appeared for the defence. The whole matter turned upon whether the original gift of the land had been a valid transfer, vesting it in the parishioners, and merging it in the old churchyard. At the close of the hearing the Judge put several specific questions to the jury, and they found that there had been a valid gift of the new ground to the parish in 1864, that it was actually occupied by the parish from that date on, and that in 1869 it had been enclosed by a wall. These answers, as anyone might have thought, clearly amounted to a verdict for the defendants. The Judge, however, interpreted them otherwise; and after reserving judgment, he found for the plaintiffs. Lloyd George at once asked for leave to appeal, and when leave

was granted, he made a request for a copy of the Judge's notes. On perusal it was discovered that these notes in their report of the findings of the jury did not tally with the answers as actually written at the time by the foreman, and handed by him to the Judge. Lloyd George, having pointed out the discrepancy, requested the Judge to amend his notes so as to bring them into agreement with the written answers. But that, for some inscrutable reason, the Judge refused to do.

The appeal came on for hearing in the Divisional Court, before the Lord Chief Justice and Mr. Justice Manisty. It did not take the Court long to make up its mind: the appeal was allowed, with costs in both courts; the rights of the parishioners were vindicated; and Lloyd George's advice to his clients completely justified. Severe things were said by both Judges about the rector as well as about the County Court Judge, Lord Coleridge threatening to report the latter's conduct to the Lord Chancellor.

This case, with its painfully dramatic features, not only added enormously to Lloyd George's reputation as an advocate of unflinching courage, unshakable determination, and sound legal judgment, but also placed him right in the public eye as the most doughty and brilliant champion of Welsh Nonconformity. Two years were yet to elapse before he found a seat in the House of Commons; but from that summer of 1888, no one doubted that he would soon be there.

And so the young solicitor made good, building in a comparatively short time one of the largest practices in North Wales. But when politics began to absorb more and more of his time, and especially after his election to Parliament in 1890, the task of running the practice devolved more and more upon his brother. A branch was opened in London; and Lloyd George's legal work was

done, from 1890 on, mainly in the metropolis. The two brothers remained in partnership ; and Lloyd George took an active part in legal work down to December, 1905 ; when, upon his appointment as President of the Board of Trade, he abandoned it for ever. It is only fair to state that during those years of fierce political controversy, between 1898 and 1905, when Lloyd George was winning his Parliamentary spurs, and playing openly for the high stake of Cabinet office, Mr. William George bore much the greater part of the heat and burden of the legal day, thereby freeing his brother for an amount of political work which he could never have coped with had he remained an ordinary practising solicitor. In one sense Lloyd George is not a self-made man : without his uncle's, and his brother's, tireless and generous efforts to help him, it is inconceivable that he should ever have become a Minister of the Crown ; and it is hardly credible that he would even have become a prosperous lawyer. He himself has never been backward in acknowledging this double debt. In 1933, Lloyd George, then perhaps the most famous subject in the British Empire, went to the little Welsh seaside town of Barmouth to open a new sea-wall. More than forty years before he had been Clerk to the Barmouth Urban District Council, and his brother still holds that office. On the occasion of the opening, in replying to a speech of welcome from his old friend the Reverend Gwynoro Davies, he spoke with gratitude of those old days of small things, and publicly gave thanks to his brother who had done so much to smooth for him the path to fame.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### FIRST STEPS IN POLITICS [1880-1890]

"**A** WELSHMAN," Mr. Lloyd George once remarked, "takes to politics as a duck does to water." If that is less obviously the case to-day, it was certainly true in the closing years of Gladstone's career, and on to the outbreak of the Great War. We have already seen how prominent a part was played by political discussion in the workshop parliament of Llanystumdwy. From his earliest infancy, Lloyd George had been perfectly familiar with the great names of the day in British politics. Parliament was, in those days, in the eyes of a Welsh village lad, a thing distant and glorious, and its famous characters were endowed with a halo which almost rivalled that of the great preachers. Nor was it by any means all romance and pageantry and nothing more: on the contrary, it was still pretty generally believed that Parliament, even if it could not usher in the millennium, could at least pass many overdue measures that would do much to redress grievances, level inequalities, and ameliorate the conditions of the working classes. At what point in his history Lloyd George began to nurse in secret the ambition of one day sitting in the House of Commons, it is impossible to say; but we do know that on his first visit to London, at the age of eighteen, he visited the Houses of Parliament, and that he wrote the following sentences in his diary:

"Went to Houses of Parliament. Very much dis-

appointed with them. Grand buildings outside, but inside they are crabbed, small, and suffocating, especially the House of Commons. I will not say but that I regard the assembly in a spirit similar to that in which William the Conqueror eyed England, on his visit to Edward the Confessor, as the region of his future domain. Oh, vanity ! ”

Three years later, when in London to sit his Final Examination, he again visited the House, and this time was present at a debate. Luckily for him, it proved to be an exciting occasion ; for Randolph Churchill was delivering one of his brilliant and audacious attacks upon Mr. Gladstone. “ It was a clever piece of comedy,” Lloyd George wrote many years later ; “ I thought Churchill an impudent puppy, as every Liberal was bound to do ; but I thoroughly enjoyed his speech.” Here we have a typical example of that admiration for the rebel, especially the rebel who goes out to challenge overwhelming power, which was to figure as a dominant motive in Lloyd George’s own career. For Lloyd George had not long been a Member of Parliament before he also defied the Grand Old Man, and before he began the practice, night after night, of baiting Joseph Chamberlain, then by far the most formidable debater in the House.

The year 1880 may perhaps be fixed upon as the time when Lloyd George first began to play an active part in politics ; and it was as a journalist that he did so. Visitors to Bron-y-de have often heard Mr. Lloyd George declare proudly that his estate at Churt was paid for entirely by his earnings as a journalist. Long years elapsed between his election to Parliament in 1890 and his retirement from office in 1922, in the course of which he never wrote for the Press ; but he never lost touch with the newspaper world and its personalities. He partook of none of

Asquith's shyness of the interviewer: in fact some of his most important and sensational utterances took the form of statements to enterprising reporters. And as everybody knows, that great journalist—Lord Riddell—became one of his closest friends, doing for him and for posterity, over a period of fourteen years, something of what Boswell did for Johnson.

No sooner had he been launched on a legal career by being articled to the Portmadoc firm of solicitors, than Lloyd George began to indulge his taste for political controversy. There happened to be two convenient instruments by which he could express himself—a flourishing debating society at Portmadoc (with another, after a time, at Ffestiniog), and the local newspapers. Soon the *North Wales Express* discovered that the contributions which an unknown writer, who signed himself "Brutus", sent in from time to time, possessed most of the qualities of good journalism. The gift of saying things wittily and biting, and often memorably, was there. A stylist in the academic sense of the term Lloyd George never has been, whether we cite in evidence his written or his spoken words, though there are unquestionably many passages in the *War Memoirs*—descriptions of events, and portraits of character—which none of the past masters need be ashamed of having written; but he could put things in such a way that they both aroused passion, and lingered in the memory. Above all, perhaps, his articles, like his speeches, were marked by an inexhaustible store of striking and apposite similes.

At the meetings of the Portmadoc Debating Society, which he joined in 1881, Lloyd George was assiduous in his attendance during the next two years; and a week seldom went by without his taking an active part in the proceedings. But the best evidence of his keenness, perhaps, is to be found in the fact that throughout the winter

months he used to walk the five miles back to his home at Criccieth, often late at night, after each meeting. Needless to say, he was then, as always, a zealous Liberal. We find him praising Chamberlain for his bold Radicalism, eagerly espousing the cause of Irish Home Rule, fiercely denouncing the House of Lords, and vigorously championing the poor and oppressed, whether the tyranny took the form of landlordism or the Established Church. Evidently the causes for which he was to fight during the succeeding thirty years were crystallising very clearly into a political programme in his mind—the rights of small nations, Wales as well as Ireland, the Boer Republics as well as Belgium; complete religious equality, implying Disestablishment and Disendowment of the Church in Wales; and economic reforms which would win for the small man a somewhat larger place in the sun. One characteristic which has always marked his political outlook and method we perceive clearly even in those early days. He was essentially a practical reformer, not a theorist. So far as we can see, he was never captivated by any complete system of political philosophy. He was a voracious reader; but there is no evidence, either in his speeches or in his private letters, that he was studying Mill, or T. H. Green, or Karl Marx; and one wonders whether Aristotle and Plato, Hobbes and Locke, Rousseau and Burke, were ever anything more than names for him. Were there not glaring grievances demanding a remedy? Was not the local squire a tyrant? Was not the local parson a snob and an oppressor? Was not a Welshman as good as an Englishman, and consequently entitled to exercise greater control over his national affairs than he then enjoyed? Above all, were not plain men, men like his uncle, and the frequenters of the Llanystumdwy “parliament”, in all essentials the equals of the landed gentry who lorded it over them so

complacently, and for that reason fully entitled to advantages of schooling and culture, as well as material comforts, which at that time were far beyond their reach? Those were the kinds of questions filling the mind of Lloyd George when on the threshold of his political career. Those grievances must be relieved, and that speedily: whether the methods of redress conformed or not to this or that political philosophy, mattered not at all.

No one can understand Lloyd George's rise to fame, or the strength of his appeal to his own countrymen in the years before he became a Cabinet Minister, without knowing something about Welsh affairs at that time. For he is always remembered, it was as the champion of Wales that he emerged into the full glare of publicity; and for many years, and those the best years of his life, it was only the particular shoes which pinched Welsh feet that interested him. If they happened to pinch the feet of sundry Englishmen as well, why, so much the better; for they might then be induced to become useful allies at Westminster. But a shoe which pinched only an English foot had for him no interest at all.

The Tudor sovereigns, bent upon their policy of uniformity, had endeavoured to assimilate Wales in all respects to England. With the upper classes they largely succeeded; but with the middle and lower classes they almost completely failed. Thus was introduced into Welsh life the serious cleavage which did so much to retard all national enterprise and to arrest all national culture. The squirearchy (munificent patrons of Welsh literature and art in the Middle Ages) and the majority of the clergy became Anglicised in speech and outlook, while the rest of the community remained truly Welsh. For two hundred years it looked as if the Welsh language and Welsh culture were fighting a losing battle; and defeat would, no doubt, have



been their lot but for the Methodist Revival of the eighteenth century. With the coming of Calvinistic Methodism, a new spirit began to manifest itself in Wales. It took many forms—religious, political, educational, literary—and its cumulative result was to emphasise the awakening nationalism of the people. Henceforward all things were judged by their tendency to promote, or to retard, that movement. Gentry and Established Church, because they had capitulated so easily to English influences, were enemies within the gate, to be fought by every loyal Welshman. Step by step the lost ground was recovered: schools were established; a university, paid for in the main with the pence of the peasantry, was founded; the Free Churches were effectively organised, and began to play a formidable part in politics.

The political awakening in Wales came considerably later than the religious and educational awakening; and when come it did, it was largely as a consequence of the others. In the Civil War, the Principality was almost wholly royalist; and when two distinct parties came to be found at Westminster, in the closing years of the seventeenth century, it gave its steady support to the Tories. It is with shame that the historian is forced to admit that Welsh lawyers (like Judge Jeffreys) were among the most brazen and unscrupulous agents of Stuart tyranny. But just as there were a few Parliamentarians in Wales in the reign of Charles I, so also in the reign of James II there were a few prominent Welshmen who gave powerful support to the revolution and the Bill of Rights. With hardly an exception, members of the old Nonconformist bodies (Congregationalists and Baptists) were strongly democratic in their sympathies. With the reign of Queen Anne, Wales settled down to the apathetic Toryism from which it was not aroused for over a hundred years. It is interesting to note

that, as was the case in France, the first notes of discord were heard among the men of letters. We hear it in the writings of Jack Glan-y-Gors, and in those of Iolo. But their rebellious sentiments found no echo in the hearts of the people. The great leaders of the Methodist Revival, and indeed almost all the famous preachers down to about 1850, were either strictly non-political, occupying themselves solely with other worldly affairs, or else were Tories. Nor did the French Revolution do much to rouse the country. Tomos Glyn Cothi (often known by his nickname of "Little Priestley") and the philosopher-preacher Richard Price, were almost solitary exceptions.

The Reform Act of 1832, which increased the number of Welsh Members of Parliament from twenty-seven to thirty-two, seems to have made no alteration in the politics of Wales; but soon afterwards, the topics which were to be fought over so pertinaciously before the close of the century, and to transform Wales from being the least politically-minded portion of Britain into by far the most politically-minded, began to emerge and to define themselves—the right of the Welshman to live his own life in his own way, to speak his own language and have it taught to his children at school, and to worship in his own chosen mode. It meant the recapturing of the lost dignity of Welsh nationality. In the eighteenth century Welshmen had almost completely sunk into a position of inferiority, and had never dreamed of asserting their claim to a position of equality in the empire in which they were, by law, partners. That any Welshman, unless he happened to belong to the Anglicised squirearchy, should aspire to a position of trust and distinction, would have been thought of as incredible. Goronwy Owen, a curate in the Church of England, and the greatest Welsh poet of the eighteenth century, writes in one of his charming letters, in 1753: "Do you ever

expect to see a Welshman a Bishop? Sooner would I give credence to the Brut which promises the second coming of Owain Lawgoch than expect ever to see a Welshman holding an office of the least distinction in either Church or State!" Down to the close of the nineteenth century, even, all the bishops in Wales were Englishmen. The Welsh language was ignorantly regarded as a mere patois, rapidly dying out; and despite George Borrow's enthusiastic praise, it was still not realised that there existed in Wales an immense native literature, going back without a break to the fifth century, much of it of first-rate value.

South Wales was rapidly becoming industrialised in the early years of the nineteenth century; and the Chartist Movement found there, and even more in the small manufacturing towns of the Severn Valley—places like Llanidloes, and Newtown, the home of Robert Owen—many followers. All through the centuries, owing to its geographical position, Wales had been influenced by two things—isolation and contact; isolation from all kindred beyond the seas and contact with its unfriendly neighbour on the land side. In the ancient Hellenic world, the sea united; but for the Celtic peoples it has been a barrier to divide. Between the Celt of Ireland and the Celt of Wales intercourse was always slight and intermittent; while between the Welshman and the Breton there was hardly any intercourse at all. Unlike his Breton cousin, the Welshman has never taken kindly to the sea; he has looked at it, often composed poetry about its terrors, and then raised his eyes to the hills for support and comfort. He became a farmer and a miner, not a fisherman or a sailor; and when he did look out at the great world, he did so through the English window. This geographical isolation, combined with dependence upon one neighbour, led also to a human isolation, mixed with a strong tincture of inferiority complex,

which is a very marked characteristic of the Welsh people. Fortunately the nation had been fully formed before the close of the eighteenth century; otherwise the combined influence of English political, social and religious ascendancy might have swept away every vestige of the fine cultural inheritance of the past. In the great fight which began in 1832, and which occupied the next eighty years, Wales came out victorious in religion, in politics, in education, and in social matters. Even industrialism, the most potent enemy of Welsh nationalism, was kept in check; and between it and the Welsh spirit the contest still goes on.

Next to the pulpit, the newspaper was much the most influential institution in Wales in the first seventy years of the nineteenth century. Without exception, those newly-founded papers were democratic, and nationalist in the wider sense; and their effect upon the political life of the community was immediate and far-reaching. The history of the Welsh Press is a heroic record. Those little papers hardly ever secured a sufficiently large circulation to make them self-supporting. Their owners, themselves far from rich, were true patriots, and consented to suffer financial loss year after year. Neither editors nor contributors were ever paid. In the main, the themes which engross the attention of all these papers are two—the wrongs of the tenant, and the wrongs of the Nonconformist. That the landlords and the parsons are the enemy was a doctrine almost universally accepted as self-evident in the Wales into which Lloyd George was born. And soon the newspapers which broadcast those views were found urging the apathetic people to elect Welsh-speaking Liberals to represent them in Parliament.

The political calm in Wales was broken in 1859—the year of the last but one of the great religious revivals. There was a General Election; and the tenant farmers of

Merioneth decided, for the first time, that they would refuse to vote for the landlord's nominee, but would run a candidate of their own. Ruthless evictions followed; and ere long, it became the settled policy of the great estate owners to inquire into the political, and even the religious, views of their tenants; and to expel all Radicals and Non-conformists. Persecution, however, only stiffened the resistance of the people; and the struggle went on. The Reform Act of 1867 helped the democratic cause; and in the following year Henry Richard was returned at the head of the poll at Merthyr Tydvil. Richard was one of the ablest and most enlightened men of his day. As an advocate of peace he became known all over Europe; and the fact that a monument to him stands now within the precincts of the League of Nations at Geneva is sufficient proof of his international reputation. At the same election six other Liberals were returned for Welsh constituencies. Fresh evictions followed, and Welsh farmers emigrated in scores to the United States. But a measure of relief was at hand: in 1872 the Ballot Act was passed, and from that day Liberalism swept onwards from victory to victory. At the 1906 General Election the Conservative Party did not win a single seat in the whole of Wales.

Lloyd George was only five years old at the time of the 1868 election; but the bitter passions which it aroused, and the sufferings of the evicted peasants, even then made an impression upon his mind which nothing was ever able to efface. Speaking about it many years afterwards he said: "Let me tell you what happened. My uncle was not the only Liberal in the parish. There were three or four others—and I will tell you what happened to them in that election. One or two of them refused to vote for the Tory candidate and two or three actually went further, and dared to record their vote for the Liberal. All of them received

notice to quit. I remember that some lads who were at school with me had to leave the neighbourhood. I was very young, but young lads do not forget things of that sort. I knew the reason why they left: it was because the squire of the parish had turned their fathers out of their homes purely because they dared to vote for the Liberal candidate. After the election notices to quit were showered upon the tenants. What happened? They were turned out by the score on to the roadside, because they dared to vote according to their consciences. But they woke the spirit of the mountains, the genius of freedom that fought the might of the Normans for two centuries. There was such a feeling aroused amongst the people that, ere it was done, the political power of landlordism in Wales was shattered as effectively as the power of the Druids. It is my first memory of politics, and that is why I am proud to be President of the Gladstone League."

The year 1886 was a red-letter date in the election annals of Wales, for it saw the victorious return of Tom Ellis as Member for Merionethshire. It is probably correct to say that not even Lloyd George, when at the zenith of his popularity between 1905 and 1914, occupied quite such a position in the hearts of the Welsh people as did that noble and gifted man. He died at the age of forty, when the only office he had held was that of Chief Whip; and it is possible that his fame would have decreased had his days been lengthened. However that may be, cut down in the flower of his manhood, when the great causes which he, with prophetic fire, had proclaimed were on the threshold of victory, he left a whole nation stricken with poignant grief at the loss, and dedicated to something akin to worship of his memory. To-day his name is seldom on the lips of a generation which has entered into the fruits of his labour; but up and down the valleys and hillsides of Wales one

still encounters many survivors of the days before 1900 ; and without exception they bow their heads in respect at the mention of the beloved name. He has become, in fact, a legend, like Owen Glyndwr, the incarnation of the spirit of Wales at its best.

Tom Ellis's path to Westminster was a much more conventional one than the path trodden by Lloyd George. He was born in a small Welsh farm called Cynlas, situated in the hills between Corwen and Bala ; and his father had known the full bitterness of a tenant's life when his politics and religion happened not to be those of his landlord. As in the case of Lloyd George, the iron had entered into the soul of Tom Ellis while he was still a child ; and he grew up with a determination to put an end to the insufferable wrongs of the tenant farmers of Wales. After spending some years, first at the British School at Llandderfel, and afterwards at Bala Grammar School, he went, while still only fifteen years old, to the recently-founded college at Aberystwyth. Although a new institution, Aberystwyth College had gathered together an exceptionally able collection of young men, among whom were S. T. Evans, afterwards one of the greatest of Admiralty Judges ; Ellis Jones Griffith, who became eminent at the Bar, and an Under-Secretary of State ; J. E. Lloyd, greatest of historians of Wales ; and O. M. Edwards, the most gifted of them all. In daily association with these brilliant men, Tom Ellis's mind developed rapidly. At the head of the college was the great scholar-preacher—Principal Thomas Charles Edwards ; and his inspiration proved of incalculable value to serious and able students like Tom Ellis. So great was the promise shown by Ellis that the principal, himself an Oxford man, persuaded him to go to New College. He went up in 1879, with Dr. R. F. Horton as his tutor.

Those were great days at Oxford—days full of questioning

of old accepted social and political dogmas, and of hopeful dreaming of better things to be. T. H. Green was teaching his bracing doctrine of political obligation. At Balliol, Arnold Toynbee was firing his listeners with enthusiasm for social work in the slums of the great cities. And in Horton, Tom Ellis found what was for him the ideal tutor—a Liberal and a Nonconformist like himself, but also a man in whom a flaming enthusiasm for democratic causes had been refined by the discipline of the schools, and broadened by profound study of past ages and the culture of other lands. Ellis entered to the full into the social and intellectual life of his college and university. He made troops of friends; some of them—like Arthur Acland—destined to influence profoundly his subsequent career. Numerous undergraduate societies numbered him among their members; and of the Palmerston Club he became secretary. To his own keen disappointment, as well as to that of his teachers, he obtained only a second in modern history.

From Oxford, Ellis went as private tutor to the youngest son of Mr. John Cory, and he also plunged on a considerable scale into amateur journalism. In 1885 he became private secretary to Sir John Brunner, the Member for Northwich. In that post his passion for politics had ample opportunity for its development; and he had an admirable point of vantage for seeing the working of our Parliamentary system from the inside. But his eye was always on Wales, and from time to time he used to go down to his native Merioneth to deliver those stirring public speeches which set the hearts of his audience burning within them. Of the hypnotic power of Lloyd George he possessed hardly a trace. His speeches were generally clumsy, halting, and lacking in eloquence; but the intense conviction and the noble thoughts so obviously behind the ragged sentences more



than made amends for these superficial defects. Wales had, among Ellis's contemporaries, many greater orators ; but not one of them approached him in durable influence. A deep admiration for Mazzini and for Thomas Davis, led him to imitate their " Young Italy " and " Young Ireland " by founding a " Young Wales ". " Some," he said on one occasion when addressing this meeting, " are overwhelmed by the hopelessness of Wales. They scorn the possibilities of distinct regeneration of Wales. So did cynics and men of a little faith scorn the hope of the young Italians. They scout the idea of Welsh national unity. So did the so-called educated classes of Italy and Austria. Metternich, the Austrian, held that Italy was a mere geographical expression, and nothing more. The Anglicised Welsh bishop of St. David's went to his Diocesan Conference to proclaim that Wales is a geographical expression, and nothing more. Metternich was woefully mistaken, and so, we believe, is the Bishop of St. David's. For it is our deepest and most cherished conviction as it was that of Young Italy, that Wales has not finished her course in this world. She is yet determined to produce new elements in the progressive development of humanity, and to live a new life. . . . After long centuries of that hidden transformation which we call the sleep of death, Wales is breaking the stone of her tomb, stirring in all her limbs, and is proving herself an awakening nation, girding herself for great effort. The elements of regeneration have been fermenting for a century. A yearning for better things is the heart's desire of the masses and youth of Wales at the present day. Her great need is the moral leverage of reform. Foremost is the consciousness of distinct nationality. The idea of nationality, it has been said, multiplies the forces of the individual, and makes known the means by which the labour and sympathies of each man's mind can be rendered efficacious

and beneficial to humanity. We have to create a national literature for Wales which is racy of the soil, and which is full of the history and traditions of Wales. When once that is done, we will have a new and irresistible movement in Wales; and Wales will become, as she was in the days gone by, a power among the nations of the world." The form of this striking appeal bears the stamp of Oxford, but the sentiment might have come straight from the shoemaker's house at Llanystumdwy. We to-day are by no means so ready to accept nationalism as the regenerative force of the world; for we live in an age in which it is threatening to reduce our earth to chaos. Neither, when we contemplate the political performances of the brightly-shirted men of many European lands in the years since 1919, are we prepared to accept without demur the thesis that youth will infallibly lead us into the Promised Land. But 1886 is not 1938; and we can no more justly blame those who held that every nation ought to aim at attaining its own best for the excesses now committed in the name of nationalism, than we can blame the educational pioneers who maintained that every boy and girl ought to learn to read for the debauching of that ability by the mercenary and sensational Press.

In 1886 the opportunity came for Tom Ellis to enter Parliament. The sitting Member for Merioneth, though a Liberal, refused to follow Gladstone on the Home Rule issue; and so the electors decided to look for another candidate. Lloyd George would seem to have cherished designs upon this citadel of Liberalism; but when he heard that Ellis was in the running, he took no further steps on his own behalf, but wrote instead to the papers strongly urging the selection of his rival. At that time, Lloyd George would have stood no chance at all of election if opposed by the man who was already regarded as the prophet of Young

Wales. Among the younger leaders of the Merioneth Liberals were some who had been fellow-students of Tom Ellis at Aberystwyth. In particular, the Reverend Gwynoro Davies, at that time Calvinistic Methodist minister at Llanuwchllyn, near Bala, and throughout his long life of eighty years an ardent Liberal, who was on terms of intimate friendship with Ellis, was determined that he should be chosen. The delegates from the various polling districts met at Dolgelley, and there was a division of opinion among them with regard to the candidate. It was doubtful whether Ellis could afford to defray his own election expenses; and if he could not do so, at least in part, the choice would by default fall on someone else. Realising the nature of the crisis, Gwynoro Davies rushed out of the meeting, and wired to Ellis imploring him at all costs to find the necessary money. Before the final vote had been taken, a reply came: "Can find £200." His supporters undertook to find the rest, and by a narrow majority of nine Ellis was chosen. Once he had been selected by the Liberal Federation as the official candidate his election was a foregone conclusion. From that time on, Tom Ellis grew every year in political stature. Soon the tall, spare figure, with its thin, reddish hair, the light-coloured moustache, and the deep-set blue eyes with the look of a seer, was known and admired from one end of Wales to another. Nor was he slow in winning his way in the House of Commons. He had not been many years a Member before he was appointed Chief Government Whip, and there were many excellent judges of capacity and worth who held that he was demeaning himself by taking any office outside the Cabinet. But in those days, Cabinet office, even in a Liberal Government, was seldom bestowed upon a young man, and hardly ever upon the son of a poor tenant farmer.

Lloyd George harboured no jealousy of the friendly rival

who had outstripped him in the race to Parliament. Speaking of this time at a later date, he said: "There are periods in the history of every nation when it finds its leaders quickly and trusts them impetuously and implicitly. Those are moments of rapid and sudden changes in a country's outlook. It was in such a time in Welsh history that Tom Ellis appeared and suddenly sprang into fame. At twenty-seven years of age he was unknown, except to an intimate circle of friends who believed in him. At twenty-eight he was a national leader. Welshmen through north and south, east and west, leapt to his standard." Asquith has left on record what he thought of the new Member for Merioneth. "Tom Ellis," he writes, "was Welsh of the Welsh, and naturally his primary interest was in questions which, directly or indirectly, affected the Principality. But he had from the first a broad political outlook, and was indifferent to nothing which bore, for good or for evil, upon the fortunes of Democracy. There were no half-shades in his political creed, just as there was never a moment's slackening of the ardour and intensity with which he sought to put it into practice. He had a rare combination of qualities which made his personality and his influence unique. He retained to the last the natural simplicity and modesty of a son of the soil, and all his old friends will agree with me that they have never known a more single-minded or a more charming character." It is wonderful how quickly this poor farm boy won admission for himself on terms of equality into the inner circle of the intellectual Liberalism of the period. Writing about those days in his *Recollections*, published twenty-seven years afterwards, John Morley (surely no mean judge of intellect and character!) refers to the pleasant informal conferences which he and his few chosen comrades-in-arms used to enjoy: "Our festive reunions," he says—"I ought to add to those I have

just named (*viz.* Haldane, Asquith, Grey and Acland) Birrell, Buxton, and Tom Ellis—had a fertility, stimulation and life in them that was refreshing, after remainder biscuit on the one hand, and quackeries on the other, and it was of better omen." It took Lloyd George fifteen years to win the influence in the inner counsels of his Party which Ellis seems to have won in four years. But then he had not been to Oxford!

In Merionethshire Lloyd George had been passed over in favour of Tom Ellis, but his own turn was not long in coming. For in 1890 a by-election occurred in the Caernarvon Boroughs, the constituency in which his own home of Criccieth was situated. In the two years which intervened between the Llanfrothen Burial Case and his election to Parliament, Lloyd George was steadily adding to his fame, and also to his experience of public affairs.

One of the practical questions at issue between Non-conformists and Anglicans was that of tithe. Farmers, no doubt, always find it disagreeable to pay tithe; but this objection to it is naturally intensified when they receive nothing in return, and are obliged, moreover, to subscribe handsomely towards the maintenance of their own chapel and their own pastor as well. An Anti-Tithe League came into existence in Wales about this time. Branches of it were established in all the counties of the north, and the farmers pledged themselves to a policy of passive resistance. South Caernarvonshire is a typically rural district, and of course it had its branch of the League; and of that branch, Lloyd George was chosen secretary. With his usual vigour he proceeded to organise meetings, and to address them himself. The majority of the local clergy in Wales chose to endure their loss with no more than a verbal protest; but outside bodies—such as the Ecclesiastical Commissioners, and the Dean and Chapter of Christ Church, Oxford—

were not so amenable, and they proceeded to take action according to law. In consequence, recalcitrant farmers received a visit from a bailiff, who levied distraint upon the stock, and then sold it by public auction. Feeling grew more and more bitter; and force on the one side led only too easily to reprisals by the other. Scenes of the utmost brutality were witnessed in some districts; and there can be no doubt that the agents of the law resorted to force far more frequently than they need have done, and that they used it ruthlessly and barbarously. So serious did the situation become, that Lord Salisbury's Government felt compelled to send a commission to inquire into the whole matter. This commission did its work fairly, and its report went far towards justifying the passive resistance of the Welsh farmers. The upshot was that an Act came to be passed which transferred the burden of the tithe from the shoulders of the farmer to those of the landlords. Whether the farmers actually derived economic benefit from the change may be doubted, for it is very likely that their rents were raised by an equivalent sum; but at least the scandal of having to put good money directly into the pockets of the clergy of a church which they disowned was obviated. Even more important was the tremendous impetus which the Anti-Tithe campaign gave to the demand for Disestablishment and Disendowment. It is a fact well worthy of note that in South Caernarvonshire, owing largely to the influence of Lloyd George, there had been no disturbances. The opposition which he organised was stubborn, yet entirely good-humoured. The novelist Berta Ruck, whose father was Chief Constable of Caernarvonshire at the time, tells in her autobiography of one distraint, followed by an auction, which ended in a gorgeous tea provided by the law-defying farmer's wife, at which were gathered amicably about the same hospitable table, the farmer, the Chief

Constable, the bailiffs, and Lloyd George! Here was the sort of "round table conference" in which the Welsh statesman has always delighted.

But although he could, as in the case of the Anti-Tithe agitation, use his influence on the side of moderation, there was little sympathy between Lloyd George and the more orthodox Liberals, who were content to look on apathetically while grievances flourished. In particular he urged that pressure should be brought to bear upon Government, whether Liberal or Tory, to grapple with such urgently needed reforms as Welsh Disestablishment, and a better system of land tenure. The agrarian policy of Michael Davitt appealed strongly to him; and when on one occasion the famous Irish agitator came to address a meeting at Ffestiniog, it was he who moved a vote of thanks to him; and he did so in a speech which for ever made his reputation in that part of Wales as a first-rate platform orator. A local medical practitioner who was present has left a record of the meeting, and in it we read that "the audience was absolutely spellbound under the sway of Mr. Lloyd George's masterly speech. Both he and Michael Jones spent the night under my roof, and Michael Davitt accompanied them to supper. I can well remember the scene as they sat around the table. Both Michael Jones and Michael Davitt were profuse in their congratulations to Mr. Lloyd George on so brilliant a speech. Davitt strongly urged him to go in for politics, and I distinctly recall how he put his hand on Lloyd George's shoulder as in the tenderest of tones he added: 'There is a future for you, my boy'". The passing of the Local Government Act had just brought County Councils into being, and Lloyd George was at once made an Alderman of the Caernarvonshire County Council. As he was still only twenty-six years old, and Aldermen are as a rule a good deal more mature, it is not surprising that

he began to be known as "The Boy Alderman". He took his duties very seriously, attending all the meetings, serving on many committees, and using the Council, so far as possible, to further the big social reforms which he had so much at heart.

Politically Lloyd George was now a follower of Tom Ellis, and a believer in Welsh Home Rule. Although not himself in the House of Commons, there was no other Welshman, Ellis alone excepted, at that time, who wielded an influence comparable with his. In 1889 he was chosen to second a resolution in favour of Disestablishment at a great meeting of the Welsh National Council, addressed by Sir William Harcourt; and he seems to have impressed the brilliant Liberal leader, himself always a bonny fighter, no less than he did the ordinary men and women of Wales. It is perhaps no exaggeration to say that not more was expected of Joseph Chamberlain and John Morley when in middle age they entered Parliament, the one rich in fame as civic reformer, the other no less rich in fame as man of letters, than was expected of the Welsh village lad who now, at the age of twenty-six, with no education save that of an old-fashioned Church school, and with not a single influential or wealthy friend to lend him a helping hand, stood on the threshold of one of the most brilliant Parliamentary careers in British history.

The opportunity which Lloyd George and his admirers had for some time been looking for came sooner than was expected, owing to the death of Mr. Swetenham, the Tory Member for Caernarvon Boroughs. It was only at the last General Election that the constituency had reverted to Conservatism after being for a brief period represented by Liberals. What the issue of the bye-election would be, no man could tell. There is no longer a constituency of Caernarvon Boroughs, for it has been merged in the wider



area of North Caernarvonshire. In 1890 it consisted of the small but ancient townships of Conway, Bangor, Caernarvon, Nevin, Pwllheli, and Criccieth. As a rule the vote totalled about four thousand, and majorities were apt to be small. In those days when there were no motor cars it was a fairly scattered constituency to work ; but all the boroughs, with the exception of Nevin, were linked together by a single-line branch of the London and North Western Railway. Needless to say, there were no late evening trains. It was not without objection being raised in some quarters that Lloyd George was adopted as the official Liberal candidate, notwithstanding his vast popularity. In the eyes of some he was too young. Effective membership of the House of Commons demanded wisdom ; and wisdom only comes with age ! Others, again, were offended by his brilliancy, his cocksureness, and his eloquence. This was an estimate of Lloyd George which took extremely long to die. Indeed, right down to the Great War critics were disposed to rate him as little better than a windy orator, quite incapable of sure judgment and solid constructive statesmanship. Even in Wales, the chosen land of oratory, there exists some of the mistrust, so common in England, of the clever man, and the fluent speaker, in politics. There were yet others who considered that Lloyd George's Liberalism was of too advanced a nature for Caernarvonshire, a county of farmers, professional men, and lodging-house keepers. Opponents spoke sarcastically of him—"The intelligence, the magnificent intellect of Mr. George," declared Sir John Puleston, M.P., at a public meeting, "does not confine him within the narrow limits of the small Principality of which we are so proud : his ideas are as boundless as the Empire itself." Those of us who think of Lloyd George as the creator of the Imperial War Cabinet, and as the leader of the British Empire Delegation

at Versailles, find it difficult to appreciate the force of such sarcasm as that; but it reflects accurately the opinion held with regard to him by all Conservatives, and by not a few Welsh Liberals as well, in those early days. "The bantam," declared one of the local gentry at a public meeting, "is the noisiest inmate of the farmyard, but he is also the smallest. Mr. Lloyd George is the bantam of the political arena." His diminutive stature, for some incomprehensible reason, seems seriously to have been a stumbling-block to many. Many years later, when his Parliamentary reputation stood high, the chairman of a meeting in England introduced him with the rather tactless remark: "We had somehow been expecting to see in him a much taller man." Upon rising to make his speech, Lloyd George was ready with his retort: "You in England," he said, "evidently measure a man from the chin downward, but we in Wales measure him from the chin upward."

That in some of these misgivings there was a substratum of truth there is no gainsaying. Lloyd George suffered then, as he has tended to do ever since, from the shortcomings of his upbringing. For, excellent as the home atmosphere had been, there was in his early years too much of the school of adversity, too little of the genial and the contented side of life, a grievous insufficiency of that breadth of outlook which is the most precious thing that the humanistic training of the great schools and the old universities has to impart. His deficiencies in these matters were, of course, the secret of much of his strength, and on a balance it is obvious that strength greatly exceeded weakness; nevertheless the weakness was there, and in those early years it was far more pronounced than it afterwards came to be. The constant struggle against adverse circumstances, the financial pinching, the feeling that he was so seriously handicapped as compared with better-to-do boys, tended to

make him narrow and bitter ; and led him to deny any virtues to institutions which he regarded as responsible—the squirearchy, and the Established Church in particular. Luckily, Lloyd George possessed one of those natures which grow more genial and mellow with success. Fortunately, the man was kindly, humorous, and tolerant. The early struggles which he went through obscured for a while these characteristics, causing him to appear to the world as harsh, sarcastic and bigoted ; but with every success which befell him, the real Lloyd George grew stronger, while these ugly and accidental characteristics were sloughed away. It is all to his credit that, when the pinnacle of success had been reached, and he was raised permanently into the company of the famous and the affluent, he lost none of the power to see things as they appear to the eyes of the poor boy. And so, while some of his most famous colleagues came to lose their early zeal for social reform, engrossed with the pleasant pursuit of parties, weddings, and week-ends spent in great country-houses, he remained always a man of the people, as sensitive as ever to the woes of the under-dog.

In the end the Liberals of Caernarvon Boroughs came to the sensible opinion that their candidate could not be expected to display a full measure of every human virtue, and that in Lloyd George they had a better man than was ever likely to come their way again. He was unanimously adopted, and the great contest began.

The Conservatives were under no illusions as to the power of their adversary, much as they affected to despise him ; and they made strenuous efforts to obtain the best possible candidate. After much pressure had been brought to bear upon him, Mr. Ellis Nanney, of Gwynfryn Castle, the kindly and powerful squire of Llanystumdwy, agreed to come forward. The situation was a dramatic one.

Gwynfryn Castle is the largest and most imposing country seat in that part of Caernarvonshire; and the Nanneys are one of the oldest of the aristocratic families of Wales. Much of the woodland in which Lloyd George used to trespass as a boy was the property of Nanney. His word was law in most of the affairs of the village and the surrounding country. And he was now to be challenged, with a seat in Parliament as the stake, by one of the poorest of his villagers. Truly a new order was coming into being; and Lloyd George was uttering no empty rhetorical flourish when he electrified an audience of eight thousand in Caernarvon pavilion in the course of the electoral contest with the words: "I once heard a man wildly declaiming against Tom Ellis because he had been brought up in a cottage. The Tories have not yet realised that the day of the cottage-bred man has at last dawned."

Some extracts from this, the first of the many election addresses which Lloyd George has issued to the constituents who have stood so loyally by him for close upon half a century, will indicate the nature of the policy which he favoured. That he is changeable is one of the stock charges brought against him; but a perusal of these addresses shows that the fundamentals of his political creed have always been pretty much the same. The only serious discrepancy between his earlier and his later creed is that, as he grew older, he came to attach less importance to Welsh Home Rule and more to the development of the British Empire. ". . . Recent by-elections prove that the country is sick and tired of Mr. Balfour's baton-and-bayonet rule in Ireland, and of his desperate attempts to repress by martial law legislative aspirations of a generous nation. I come before you as a firm believer in and admirer of Mr. Gladstone's noble alternative of Justice to Ireland.

"Whilst fully recognising that the wrongs of Ireland

must of necessity have the first claim upon the attention of the Liberal Party, I am deeply impressed with the fact that Wales has wants and aspirations of her own which have too long been ignored, but which must no longer be neglected. First and foremost amongst these stands the cause of Religious Liberty and Equality in Wales. If returned to Parliament by you, it shall be my earnest endeavour to labour for the triumph of this great cause. Wales has for many a year yearned in her heart for the attainment of that religious equality and freedom which is impossible whilst the English Church as by law established is imposed upon us as the National Religion of Wales, and is maintained by Welsh national endowments, and whilst clerical bigotry dominates over our Churchyards.

"The Liberal Party has recently placed the Disestablishment and Disendowment of the English Church in Wales in the forefront of its platform, and I earnestly trust that you, the electors of a Nonconformist constituency, will not openly reject this proffered boon by returning a Tory representative.

"I believe that our land and labour laws work inequality and injustice, and I am in favour of measures for simplifying and cheapening the Transfer of Land; for the Taxation of Ground-Rents; the Enfranchisement of Leaseholds; and for improving the condition of the Tenant-Farmer and Labourer.

"I have always been a consistent advocate of Temperance, and had the privilege of being largely instrumental in bringing about the adoption of the 'Direct Vote' by the party at the recent Liberal Conference in Manchester. If returned to Parliament, I shall do all in my power to support measures which have for their object the removal from our midst of the disastrous temptations of strong drink.

"I take a keen interest in our river and sea fisheries, and

had the honour of being the first member of the Caernarvonshire County Council to propose the application of the Sea Fisheries Regulations Act to the sea-board of this county. I should like to see the powers of that Act amplified and made more practicable.

"I believe in a liberal extension of the principle of Decentralisation. There are also such questions as: 'One Man One Vote', 'Graduated Taxation', 'A Free Breakfast Table', and many another much-needed reform; but what availeth it even to enumerate them while there is a Tory Government in power."

Both sides put all their strength into the contest. Outsiders of eminence were brought into the constituency to speak. Mr. Gladstone wrote a letter warmly approving of the Liberal candidate's election address; and (a fact which carried almost as much weight in the Wales of 1890) Tom Ellis sent a message urging the electors to vote for Lloyd George. The election took place on the 10th of April, and on the following day the result was declared. On the first count Nanney had emerged with a small majority; but it turned out that some voting papers had been wrongly placed to his account. Finally the figures were ascertained to be:

LLOYD GEORGE 1,963.

ELLIS NANNEY 1,945.

Thus by a narrow majority of eighteen the "Boy Alderman" became the "Boy M.P.". Never afterwards was the margin so narrow; for until the criticism with which Lloyd George dogged the footsteps of the National Government had estranged many of his former supporters, and the Labour Party and the Welsh Nationalists had beguiled the hearts of others, his majorities grew bigger with each succeeding election. On April 17th the new Member took

his seat, being introduced by Mr. Stuart Rendel and Mr. Acland. It was Budget Day, and a constable on duty in the lobby recalls how the Member for Caernarvon Boroughs, while waiting outside for questions to be ended, remarked to him: "I wonder how a Chancellor of the Exchequer feels when he is about to introduce his Budget? I expect he feels very nervous." In nineteen years from that date, Lloyd George was opening his own first, and most famous, Budget; but not even the most lynx-eyed of spectators could have detected the slightest sign of nervousness! Needless to aver, on Budget Day the House could hardly be expected to evince much interest in an insignificant new Member. Goschen, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, and Randolph Churchill, still sore after what he regarded as his ill-treatment at the hands of the Prime Minister, were the cynosure of all eyes. But at least one newspaper correspondent deigned to notice him, and to pen a brief description which it is hard to believe was an accurate one even then. "Mr. Lloyd George," he wrote, "is a young man, pale and stooping, and of a lounging gait, suggestive of a shrunk Mr. Finlay." Those of his contemporaries who are familiar with the tanned face, the straight alert figure, and the swinging gait of Mr. Lloyd George as he strides across the Surrey hills, can only conclude that his physique underwent in subsequent years a transformation about as great as his worldly fortunes.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### THE WELSH CHAMPION [1890-1895]

THE Parliamentary stage when Lloyd George first walked on to it in 1890 presented a particularly exciting scene. Both at home and abroad big movements, fraught with important consequences for all parties concerned, were in progress. Salisbury's Government had been in office since 1886; and in those days of septennial Parliaments, might reasonably expect another two years before being obliged to go to the country. Ireland was the dominating issue. Over that question the Liberal Party had been shattered, though the majority of its members, with true democratic instinct, faithfully followed Gladstone; and there had not yet arisen that conflict of leadership which came near to ruining it in the last eight years of the century. The Liberal Unionists were rapidly becoming mere Conservatives; and Chamberlain, their leader, was even more expeditiously shedding his inconvenient Radicalism, and blossoming into the full-blown Tory Imperialist. Parnell, fresh from his sensational victory over *The Times*, though on the brink of his own tragic eclipse, was at the head of a well-disciplined and formidable Irish Party—a Party which put Ireland always first, and Liberalism second, and which would give no quarter, and allow no respite, to any Government which did not place Home Rule in the forefront of its programme. Abroad likewise great things were afoot. Triple Alliance was provoking into being the Dual Alliance. Turkey was displaying



clear symptoms of disintegration. The last stages in the more-or-less peaceful partition of Africa were being carried out. In South Africa disputes were arising between British interests and the rights of the self-governing Boer Republics. Here were controversial topics enough to satisfy the most pugnacious of Parliamentary gladiators, and to enable any novice to win his spurs.

The big question which Lloyd George had to settle for himself at the outset was whether he would be a Liberal first and foremost, or, after the manner of the Irishmen, accord the first place to Wales. That issue had been mooted in the course of his election campaign. Some powerful elements in the constituency had endeavoured to extract a pledge from the candidate that, if returned, he would withhold his support from any Liberal Government which did not put a Welsh Disestablishment and Disendowment Bill in its programme, and promise to use all its power to pass it immediately into law. Others, however, were for trusting Mr. Gladstone; arguing that it would be soon enough to talk about coercing one's own leaders when the Liberal Party had been returned to power with a good majority. For one thing was quite certain: in spite of Chamberlain's many pronouncements in favour of Disestablishment, no Conservative Government would ever champion such a measure. This latter was, on the whole, Lloyd George's own view; and he had resolutely refused to give any such pledge as was asked of him by the more extreme Nonconformists.

But it was one thing to view the Liberal Party from the distance of Criccieth, with all the enchantment with which the intervening two hundred miles were able to invest it, and quite another thing to see it at close quarters. And Lloyd George had not been many weeks in the House before coming to the conclusion that, unless compelled to

do so, Gladstone at least had no intention of making Welsh Disestablishment a serious issue. The whole of Wales had been accustomed for years to regard Gladstone with an admiration bordering upon idolatry. They knew quite well that he was a High Churchman, than which there were few things they disliked more; and it is surely a fine testimonial to the political sense of the Welsh people that, with all their intense Nonconformity, they gave their whole-hearted support to Gladstone, who appeared to them to be little better than a Papist, and to John Morley, knowing him to be an Agnostic. One of the writer's earliest recollections is of the day of Gladstone's funeral. He was in a small town in North Wales; and on that day of real mourning every shop and office was closed, every blind drawn, and the whole population thronged the chapels for memorial services. For any Welsh Member, and especially for a young one, to impugn the good faith of the great leader, and to head an opposition to him, was a very serious and hazardous undertaking.

That in the matter of Disestablishment Gladstone could not be trusted, and consequently ought to be opposed, was the conclusion come to by Lloyd George in the course of a visit to Hawarden, whither he had gone with a thousand loyal supporters of the G.O.M. from Caernarvonshire. For on that occasion he had had a plain talk with the veteran statesman, and utterly failed to extract from him an unequivocal promise to include the desired measure in the programme with which the Liberal Party would go to the country at the next General Election. From that hour, Lloyd George considered and called himself a Welsh Nationalist rather than a Liberal; and so he remained until the reconstituting of the Liberal Party under Campbell-Bannerman at the close of the Boer War. In his militant nationalism he, at that time, went further than

Tom Ellis. The latter accepted office under Lord Rosebery, without any specific pledge having been received with regard to Disestablishment. Lloyd George tried hard to dissuade his friend from giving this unconditional support, but without success. Ellis felt very sore over this defection on the part of his most brilliant Welsh colleague, in the very hour of crisis for the Liberal Party; and the early confidence which had bound the two men together was never afterwards wholly restored. On the personal issue, Tom Ellis's impression was that Lloyd George was opposed to his taking office of any sort in a Liberal Government which had not put Disestablishment in its immediate programme. But Lloyd George has always maintained that that was a misapprehension on the part of his friend; and that all he really objected to was his taking an office like that of Chief Whip, the holder of which could exercise no direct influence upon the policy of the party. For his own part, Lloyd George remained unattached, an able and willing supporter of every Liberal measure likely to be of benefit to Wales, but a vigilant critic of his own, no less than of the Conservative, Party.

There are few things in British political annals on their personal side more amazing than the rapidity with which Lloyd George pushed his way into the front rank of his Party. The explanation is to be found, no doubt, in the fact that he combined powers of platform oratory second to none, and debating skill which made him at once the match of the most skilful swordsmen of the two Front Benches. Putting on one side Gladstone, whose days were nearly done, and Rosebery and Harcourt, whose mutual hostility destroyed their influence, as it also threatened to destroy the Liberal Party itself, there was a galaxy of Liberals of unusual brilliancy pressing to the front, some of them young, others of mature age, but all full of energy, and able to give

many years of strenuous service in office. There was Morley, easily the greatest English publicist of the day. Then there were the three friends—Asquith, Grey, and Haldane—acknowledged to possess first-class intellects, and to have debating powers of the highest order. Bryce and Birrell were professional scholars, but men of boundless political knowledge, and of apt and ready speech. All these men between them represented the finest flower of the English, Scottish, and German universities; and had they never touched politics at all, every one of them would be famous in virtue of some other title. One and all had minds trained in the scientific study of politics, and stocked with the culture of all lands and all ages. Such were the men with whom the "little Welsh attorney", entirely self-trained, was associated; and it is astonishing indeed that within half a dozen years of his first entering the House of Commons, he was recognised as their equal, and was as much sought after as the best of them by the largest political demonstrations up and down the country.

Lloyd George was probably at his best as a platform speaker in the years from 1890 to 1906. As a debater in the House of Commons he had much to learn by experience, and his best days were far ahead. The seventeen years of continuous Cabinet office, between 1905 and 1922, improved his debating powers, but took a good deal away from his platform oratory. For one thing he had, as a busy Minister, far less time to devote to the preparation of his speeches. But even more, in all probability, is the reason to be found in the fact that there is in Lloyd George's nature a great deal of the born free-lance; for he has never been quite at his best when running in official traces, and when defending concrete political proposals. For just a moment in the autumn of 1914 he recovered his old power; for the invasion of Belgium, and the iniquities of militarism

in general, awakened the old prophetic fire within him, touching the chords upon which he had played with such consummate mastery when pleading for the peasants of Wales, and for the farmers of the Transvaal.

It used to be generally believed that Lloyd George devoted but little time and care to the preparation of his platform speeches. He was supposed to possess in uncommon measure the gift of the gab; and it was thought that he had only to open his lips for the words to pour forth. That he possessed an unusually fine natural equipment for an orator's career is, of course, perfectly true. Insignificant in stature, especially in those days when age had not yet given to his figure a more massive contour, on the platform he seemed to expand and to tower. The great head, adorned even then with long wavy hair, the clear-cut features, the flashing steel-blue eyes—all played their part in creating a favourable impression on the audience. And when he spoke, the wonderful voice, every note of it under absolute control, would cause thrills to pass through those who listened, making them laugh and cry alternately, and always ending by rousing in them a frenzy of enthusiasm. A great and varied command of graceful gesture has always been a prominent part of his platform art. But above all, he has always possessed that indefinable thing which we call eloquence—the power of saying things in such a way as to make them felt in the innermost recesses of one's being. It was said of Whitefield that merely to hear him pronounce the word "Mesopotamia" used to thrill his congregations. In the same way, all those who ever heard Lloyd George at his best will testify that to hear him say: "Mr. Chairman, my dear fellow-countrymen," would always send a thrill through an audience, particularly a Welsh one. What the world in general did not know was that a great deal of very hard spade-work had gone to the making of those dazzling

platform displays. Not that Lloyd George in the best years of his oratorical career ever wrote out his speeches in full, or even in part; but the whole of the argument was carefully thought out, illustrations chosen, facts and figures collected, and frequently an array of epigrams and witticisms committed to paper. Finally a few headings would be jotted down on an old envelope; and with that to refresh his memory, the speaker would face his audience. His famous perorations were nearly always carefully prepared, and very often rehearsed in the hearing of his wife or friends. And so great was his respect for his uncle's, and his brother's, judgment, that he used to send them an outline of a speech which he was intending to deliver, and invite their comments upon it. "I enclose the notes of the speech I intend delivering on the Welsh Church at the Tabernacle," he writes to them not long after his election to Parliament. "Read it and send me your candid opinion as to its merits or demerits. It is simply a rough outline, mind you. Will it do if duly elaborated? Let me have your opinion per return. Show it to the Esgob" ("the Bishop"—a term of endearment and respect for his uncle). "He can send it to me on Friday. If you or he have any good story or joke in support, send it on." His sense of the dramatic, and his almost uncanny gift of knowing the temper of his audience, have always been noteworthy characteristics of Lloyd George the orator. Every really great speaker always receives at least as much from his audience as he gives to it; and for that reason, success can never attend the efforts of a man who delivers verbatim in public a speech which he has prepared in the cold blood of the study. It is its impromptu passages that make a speech great; and never was an orator more elastic than Lloyd George, and therefore more able to weave into the prepared skeleton the inspired sentiments and phrases of the moment. Yet even in the matter of

knowing his audience, he liked, whenever possible, to prepare the ground in advance. A Welsh friend has told the writer how, in those early days, he was standing with Lloyd George at a window, watching the villagers arriving at a "difficult" meeting which he was about to address. He insisted on knowing the occupation, and something of the history and character, of every member of the audience as he arrived. The consequence was, that when he confronted them on the platform, he was able to read their thoughts like an open book, and to use precisely those arguments, and those appeals to their feelings, which were most likely to prove conciliatory.

It must be borne in mind that by far the greater part of Lloyd George's speaking, up to the time when he first entered the House of Commons, had been in Welsh. That, of course, was the language of his home, of his chapel, and of practically all his professional legal work. It was also the language of the political platform in North Wales. Even now, when Lloyd George speaks in his own constituency, he employs Welsh as much as English. Needless to say he was more fluent in his native tongue than in English for many years; and there are those who have listened to his finest speeches in both languages who will tell you that his English speaking never quite came up to the standard of his Welsh. In his own language his diction was choicer; the Biblical allusions and quotations sounded more natural and telling; and the homely touches, born directly from his own experience of a cottager's life in rural Wales, found their mark with a more unerring aim. Long years of work in England, with almost the whole of his speaking done in English, by degrees deprived him of his pristine command of picturesque and idiomatic Welsh. But for that matter, there has been, in recent years, an all-round deterioration in Lloyd George's platform oratory, both English and Welsh.

Only of his debating skill in the House of Commons can it be said that it is as wonderful as ever.

Particular reference may with advantage be made here to one or two of Lloyd George's early platform triumphs in England; not because they were greater, or as great even, as many triumphs which were to come to him in middle life, but because they happened to a young man of twenty-seven, who had come from the remotest corner of Wales, and who had been in Parliament only a few months.

The first of these examples is a speech which he made at the Methodist Tabernacle at a meeting of the Liberation Society. To his disgust he found, when the evening arrived, that he had been assigned the lowest place on a long list of speakers. Campbell-Bannerman was in the chair, and with characteristic humour he introduced the speaker as "a young brave with the scalp of a Tory Member somewhere about him". Lloyd George's speech was devoted to Welsh Disestablishment; and notwithstanding the unpropitious circumstances, it was a striking success. Birrell and Campbell-Bannerman were loud in their praises. Even the orator himself was pleased. "I was stuck at the very end of the programme," he wrote in a letter home, "after three or four weary and dreary speeches, and a collection, had depleted the building of a considerable part of its audience, and of all but one or two of the reporters. Not a man moved while I spoke. They were all attention. The cheering and laughter which greeted my remarks drove me on from point to point until, notwithstanding the lateness of the hour, and my fixed determination not to speak for more than five or ten minutes, I must have occupied at least twenty-five minutes. And what was strange was that when I sat down the audience seemed surprised." Evidently he possessed even then the accomplished orator's gift of getting instantly on to good terms with his



audience ; while his independence of the written word enabled him then, as always, to adjust his speech, as to length and character, to the mood of the listeners.

His second triumph, which occurred a few days later, was even more sensational. It was at a great demonstration in the Free Trade Hall, Manchester, called to denounce the " compensation clauses " of the Local Taxations Bill. Lloyd George had the advantage of being able to remind his audience that he had been born in Manchester. From the outset the speech seems to have gripped its hearers. Again and again there were tremendous outbursts of applause ; and when he sat down the great audience leapt to its feet and shouted itself hoarse. His own comment reflects a satisfaction that was fully justified. " As regards voice and gesture," he wrote, " I never spoke half so well. I had absolute command over myself and my audience from the very start. Caine said : ' You have made your reputation in England by that speech ' "

Those were difficult days for the Liberal Party ; and a young speaker, full of fire, eloquence, wit, and solid ability, was bound to be in great demand up and down the country as soon as his fame began to get about. His very recklessness and pungent assaults upon the enemy, as was the case with F. E. Smith after the Tory debacle of 1906, were all in his favour with Liberal audiences which loved to picture him as a young David doing battle against the Conservative Goliath. With the exception of Rosebery, the accredited leaders of the Party—Harcourt, Campbell-Bannerman, Morley, Asquith, Haldane and Grey—were none of them first-rate platform men : they lacked brilliance, and the kind of audacious combativeness which raises the hearts of those who have travelled long in the gloomy valley of Opposition. Alone among the famous Liberals of the day Gladstone and Rosebery were outstanding popular orators ; and in 1890 the former was too old to be much depended upon, while the

erratic ways, and the incalculable moods of the latter made it impossible to depend upon him at all. It is interesting to learn that, within two or three years of his first appearance on an English platform, discerning connoisseurs of political oratory were seriously comparing Lloyd George with Gladstone. A Birmingham citizen who was then a very young man has told the writer of how he was accosted one day by a friend with the remark: "Come with me to-night to a meeting at the school. A young Welshman, Lloyd George, is to speak; and they say he is another Gladstone." Not long after, we find Lloyd George addressing a huge meeting in Birmingham again, this time in the Bingley Hall, and beginning that prolonged series of attacks upon Chamberlain, upon which, in the main, his House of Commons fame was founded.

It is one thing, however, to have a great reputation as a platform speaker, and quite another to succeed in Parliament. There have been men in plenty who have won pre-eminent triumphs in the one sphere, and yet been abject failures in the other. John Bright was never in the House of Commons the inspired speaker which he was on the platform. Asquith and Balfour, never perhaps excelled in our time as House of Commons speakers, were not more than tolerably successful when confronted by a large popular audience. Very different techniques are required for success in the two places; and the perfecting of the one kind is generally achieved at the cost of the other. A few speakers, no doubt, do achieve the difficult task of becoming supremely great in both techniques; Gladstone did, and so also did Chamberlain, Randolph Churchill, and F. E. Smith. But it can be said without fear of contradiction that, in recent times, with the solitary exception of Gladstone, no man has stood so high, both as a Parliamentary debater and a mass orator, as Lloyd George. We have now to look at his first steps towards fame in the House.

We have a reference by Lloyd George himself to his first division. "My first division last night. I voted against Bimetallism, but I couldn't tell you why." When he had sat for only a week, he summoned enough courage to put a question to W. H. Smith, the Leader of the House. He was waiting, however, to make a speech, and that at the earliest suitable moment. "I shan't speak in the House this side Whitsuntide holidays," he wrote to his uncle three weeks after his election. "Better not appear too eager. Get a good opportunity and make the best of it—that's the point." The opportunity arrived on June 13th, 1890, when the House was discussing an amendment to the Local Taxations Bill and its compensation clauses, moved by Acland. Technicalities apart, the purport of this amendment was the insertion of a clause in the Bill directing that the sum of £350,000 should be applied in England for the purpose of agricultural, commercial, and technical instruction, and in Wales for the same purposes or for the purposes defined in the Welsh Intermediate Act of 1889. In other words, the purpose was to divert that sum from the purpose of "pensioning the publicans" and establishing a vested interest in a licence, into channels of public utility. Here was a subject after Lloyd George's own heart. From early youth he had been the keenest of temperance reformers; and he regarded publicans and brewers as public enemies, about as pernicious as squires and peers. And there was this further point: the money could thus be directed from the pocket of the wicked "Trade" into the coffers of the needy Welsh County Schools. Lloyd George's speech was a fierce onslaught on publicans. "We have heard," he cried, "a great deal about law and order in Ireland. I think there ought to be a Coercion Act for publicans, armed with all the modern appliances, such as Star Chamber inquiries, informers, 'shadows', and removable magistrates.

In my belief very few publicans would survive such an inquisition." Here was a fine double thrust, one point directed at the unholy alliance of the Conservative Party with the publicans, the other directed to the stern policy of coercion which was being carried out by Balfour in Ireland. A sarcastic reference to Randolph Churchill's "mushroom rectoralism" was followed by an attack upon Joseph Chamberlain: "In Wales we cannot understand the conduct of the noble Lord the Member for Paddington, and the Right Hon. gentleman the Member for West Birmingham. Not so very long ago the latter promulgated the doctrine of 'ransom', which is the exact reverse of compensation. The fact is that the noble Lord and the Right Hon. gentleman are political contortionists, who can perform the great trick of planting their feet in one direction and setting their faces in another." As we have already seen, Chamberlain was the political idol of Lloyd George, when the former was the fiercest of Radical demagogues, and the latter was a peasant boy, impatient of the slower and politer methods of the Liberal oligarchy. All the greater was his hatred of the renegade when Chamberlain recanted these past professions, deserted both his allies and the cause, and took service with the very caste which he had spent the best part of his life in denouncing. It was a truceless war which the veteran politician, and the young apprentice to statecraft, were to wage against each other for the next sixteen years. Its close found Chamberlain a broken and a disappointed man, and Lloyd George the unrivalled champion of the British working classes.

In these days, when so scanty a space is devoted by our newspapers to Parliamentary proceedings, it is a little difficult to understand how it was that an admittedly clever speech, by a practically unknown new member, should have attracted so much attention in the Press; but it was so.

*The Times* alluded to it in its leader next day. "Rather a clever speech," was the description given in the Tory *Daily Graphic*. "The new Member for Caernarvon," declared the *Pall Mall Gazette*, "made a capital maiden speech, full of promise for his future career." Gladstone had been present, and was reported to be "exceedingly delighted" with the performance. Sir William Harcourt was loud in his praise. It is interesting to hear Lloyd George's own opinion, written in a letter home: "I have just spoken for the first time in the House, and if I am to judge by the cheers I got during the progress of my speech and immediately after I sat down, and also the congratulations I received, must have succeeded beyond my very highest expectations. T. W. Russell got up immediately after me and congratulated me upon my maiden speech 'with which I had charmed the House'. The House cheered again at this. There was a very good audience, and although at first they appeared to be indifferent, as they generally are when insignificant Members speak, they soon—both sides—listened intently."

It is very well known that the House of Commons is almost invariably indulgent to a new Member addressing it for the first time; but the indulgence is limited to that occasion only. When next the speaker rises, he must expect no reward beyond his just deserts. That is why so many Parliamentarians have expressed the opinion that it is a man's second and third speeches which make or mar him. Lloyd George did not put the matter to the test until two months had elapsed since his successful maiden speech. It was an inauspicious occasion that he chose; for the House was debating a vote for expenditure in connection with certain royal pageantry, and Lloyd George took upon himself the unpopular role of critic. He was fully conscious of the risks he was running: "I cannot," he wrote, "gain much in this House by my speech; on the contrary, I may

lose much influence—these M.P.s are so frightfully decorous and respectable. My audience is the country." But fear never deterred Lloyd George from speaking his mind, and the speech was duly made. No dire consequences followed, however, and the second milestone of his Parliamentary career was successfully passed.

Not much need be said about Lloyd George's first session. In the middle of August it came to an end. He had made a couple of speeches, one of them remarkably successful. Many questions had been asked. He had served on a committee, and, incidentally, acquired a pronounced dislike for such work. Above all, he had given satisfaction to his constituents, who were very proud of the place which their young representative had so quickly won for himself. Brilliant members of the Party were disposed to be friendly towards him. His maiden speech had so impressed John Morley that he hastened to invite him to dinner; and the two men, differing profoundly as they did in training, equipment, and temperament, discovered that in the political field they held an unusual amount of ground in common. Birrell, whose scintillating wit and inexhaustible store of literary lore, made him a coveted guest at every dinner table, also went out of his way to make himself agreeable. Altogether it is obvious that Lloyd George had no reason to be dissatisfied with the first four months of his Parliamentary life.

Another two years were to elapse before a new House of Commons would place the Liberals somewhat precariously in power, and so bring to the front as a practical issue the Welsh problems which, in those days, were Lloyd George's main interest. It is hardly necessary at this point of time to deal at length with the dry husks of dead political controversies; and only the briefest mention need be made of the part which Lloyd George played in them. In many ways it was a time of great men and little causes; yet it is

indisputable that the men found themselves able to get very excited, and sometimes very angry, about the causes. Something at least must be said about them here ; for that was the formative period of the pre-War Radical statesman, and his measures, when he came to yield real, and indeed paramount, influence in the councils of the Party, can only be properly understood if we trace them to their roots.

The catastrophe which overwhelmed Parnell was, of course, " the nine days' wonder " of 1890. Never afterwards did the Irish at Westminster possess so able a leader. With Parnell dead and discredited, the initiative really passed into the hands of the English Liberals ; and it was not until 1910, when they had been five years in office, that they grappled seriously with the problem. The great mind, and the great heart, of Gladstone had seen the proper solution ; but in this, as in the field of international relations, he was far ahead of his time, and there were no shoulders broad enough to wear his mantle when the time came for him to lay it aside. Lloyd George was, it need hardly be said, in favour of Home Rule for Ireland ; but the cause never aroused his passionate enthusiasm. With him ends always counted for more than means, and as time went on, he showed greater and greater coolness towards such theoretical matters as self-determination, and ever-increasing preoccupation with practical reforms. It is obvious that, in his judgment, it would be preferable to have a beneficent reform conferred upon Ireland or Wales by an English Parliament, than to have a worse measure emanating from a native legislative body. In that respect he differed profoundly and fundamentally from the true Home Ruler ; for the latter believes that it is far better for a nation to govern itself ill than to be governed well by foreigners.

A prominent part was taken by Lloyd George in the House in connection with the Tithe Recovery Bill of 1890. Here

was a battleground with which he was already familiar; and he exploited all the possibilities of the subject to focus attention upon the wider issue of Disestablishment and Disendowment. The new Bill shifted the incidence of the tithe from the occupier to the owner, and enacted that it should be collected by distraint. That would make it impossible for the Welsh tenant to fight the parson without at the same time fighting his landlord. On the minor issue Lloyd George approved of the measure: he based his attack upon the view which he always held, that tithe ought to belong to the community as a whole. "We Welsh representatives," he declared, "lay claim to the tithe as endowments belonging to the whole people, and not to a mere section." That was, in brief, the main argument in favour of Disendowment emphasised throughout the twenty-four years of fierce controversy which were to ensue. The spirit, it was contended, is more important than the letter; and what we ought to try and give effect to is the real intention of the pious donors. What, then, was their intention? Surely it was to do the greatest service to the highest well-being of the people at large. In the days when there was but one Catholic Church, and even in the first two centuries of the Anglican Establishment, it might well be argued that ecclesiastics were the most satisfactory instruments for discharging the great work. But could that any longer be held to be true? Now there was not one Church, but several; three-quarters, at the very least, of the people of Wales being outside the pale of both the historic Churches. Furthermore, the Church was no longer the sole educator, the sole physician, the sole carer for the sick, the insane, and the poor. All those beneficent activities were now carried out by other organisations—some by the State, some by Nonconformist bodies, some by private societies. Was it not right, then, that tithe, and indeed all ancient endowments, should be put into the



hands of those who were actually doing the good work? "Robbing God" was the counter-cry of the clergy and their friends: but that cry is valid only if we regard God as synonymous with the Anglican Church and its ministry.

The Local Option Bill of 1891 raised another question in which Lloyd George was intensely interested. As we have already seen, temperance was one of the chief subjects upon which he had exercised his powers of public speaking in the early days at Criccieth; for Nonconformist Wales was as determined upon abolishing drunkenness, in so far as it could be done by legislation, as upon ending the power of squire and parson. Before cheap sneers are indulged in at a creed which had teetotalism as one of its articles, it is at least desirable to ask the question why it should have been so. The answer is not far to seek. Puritanism, which swept over England in the first half of the seventeenth century, hardly invaded Wales at all. Right down to the middle of the eighteenth century Wales was ignorant, drunken, and brutish. John Wesley declared the people to be "as little versed in the principles of Christianity as a Creek or Cherokee Indian." Of course not too much must be made of the testimony of extreme Puritans, who were scandalised by what they considered to be desecration of the Sabbath, and by such things as wrestling, dancing, cock-fighting, and the drinking, in however small quantity, of intoxicating liquor. But when all possible allowance has been made for Puritan prejudice, a terrible indictment can still be drawn up; for the majority of the Welsh people must have been totally illiterate, extremely superstitious, and without thought save for the gratification of their bodily needs and desires. From this slough of bestiality the Puritanism of the Methodist Revival rescued Wales; and as usual, the pendulum swung to the opposite extreme. All games were regarded as of the Devil; and cards and

dancing were particularly frowned upon. Worst of all, in the eyes of the enlightened, was the habit of excessive drinking. A completely sober people came to be the ideal; and after a time, the various Nonconformist Churches made total abstinence obligatory upon all ministers and office-bearers; while a single lapse from temperance on the part of an ordinary member was visited with expulsion from the society. When Lloyd George was a boy, the total abstinence movement was at its height. The "Temperance Meeting" was a regular feature of the Sunday activities. Children in Sunday School and Band of Hope were persuaded to "take the pledge". Whether it was cause or effect, it is not easy to determine; but the incontestable fact is that Toryism, Episcopacy, and the Drink Traffic always went hand-in-hand. The publicans were nearly always Churchmen, and invariably Conservatives in politics. And it was mentioned with a shudder that the parson and the squire had the habit of discussing parish affairs over a bottle of port wine without a blush. The immense progress in the direction of sobriety and clean living which has been made both in England and in Wales in the past quarter of a century, has rendered us, perhaps, a little unable to do full justice to the men who were fighting the demon of drunkenness when it was still, beyond all question, the biggest social evil in the land.

A Clergy Discipline (Immorality) Bill, innocent and praiseworthy in intention, and powerfully supported by Gladstone, supplied Lloyd George with an opportunity for drawing public attention to some of the anomalies incident to an Established Church. In co-operation with S. T. Evans, D. A. Thomas, and Tom Ellis, he invented endless devices for delaying the measure in committee. He moved an amendment in the House, to the effect that "it is no part of the function of the State to attend to matters of spiritual discipline". It was a long and ingenious speech,

and it stirred Gladstone to the depths. When the young man had ended, the great statesman rose, and in a brilliant and lengthy speech he proceeded to deal point by point with his arguments. Lloyd George listened with glistening eyes, for it was, perhaps, the biggest compliment that he had yet received. "He's a grand debater, this old man," was his admiring comment. In an article contributed to a Welsh paper Lloyd George described this struggle in committee, saying how Gladstone "would just sit and shake his head at us when we moved an amendment, and glare at us with his fierce eye—oh, how fierce when you were fighting him!"

Meanwhile Lloyd George was in greater demand than ever on the public platform; and as we peruse these early speeches, made by him in 1891 and 1892, there rises in our mind very clearly the outlines of the policy upon which the "People's Budget" of 1909 came to be formed. We find him at Merthyr defining his ideal for Wales as "a free religion and a free people in a free land". At Bangor he denounces the class bias of the Tories: "What are the components of the Tory Party in this country? It contains practically the whole of the members of the privileged classes. Their numbers, and far more their wealth and their influence, constitute the chief ingredients of its power. They must therefore wield its policy. Now, what are the privileged classes? They are all those who squander the resources of the country without turning a sod to create it. They are monopolists who spend untold millions of the products of our mines and factories without blasting a rock, handling a machine, or even wielding a pen to build up that wealth. These are the governing forces of the Tory Party." Then follows a plain hint of the policy which in his famous Budget was to take the form of taxation of "unearned increment." "As the law stands at present a landlord may let his land for building purposes, charge a ground rent of

ten times the agricultural value of the land, and at the end of sixty years take possession of land, buildings and all. And yet, although the local rates are being spent to improve his property by drainage, gas, street improvements, and in other ways, he does not contribute a penny towards that expenditure. The whole of the local expenditure, so far as the land is concerned, falls upon the poor householder, who, after paying heavy rates and exorbitant ground rents, has to surrender the whole fruits of his labour to this landlord who does nothing. Now, when the Liberal Party during the present session of Parliament proposed that the landlord should at least bear his share of the local rates, the Tories in a body voted against it." And, bringing the matter on to a local basis, with a fierce thrust at the unpopular Lord Penrhyn, and other territorial magnates in the vicinity of Bangor, he declared: "The most startling fact about our country is this—that you have men who have accumulated untold wealth living in gorgeous splendour in one street, and a horde of miserable, poverty-stricken human beings huddled together in the most abject penury and squalor in the adjoining courts. Incalculable wealth and indescribable poverty dwell side by side. Why, in this very Bangor union, where you have noblemen and squires enjoying riches which they are at their wits' end to know how to squander, and commanding such amplitude of resources that they are absolutely running to waste for want of use, I was startled to observe in the last return of pauperism that on January 1st last, one out of every twenty of the population was in receipt of parish relief. In London, with all its deplorable poverty, the paupers constitute but one out of every thirty-nine of the population. And it is not that the country around Bangor is barren and desolate. On the contrary, it is rich in agricultural and mineral wealth. But the riches, intended by Providence for the people, are intercepted ere they reach

them. It is a matter which is notorious to all of you that there is not one of the horses of these high-born gentlemen that is not better fed, better housed, and less worked than thousands of working men in this very union. Things must be equalised. This deplorable state of things cannot go on for ever. But let no working man make a mistake: the party which is dominated by the plutocrats and millionaires is not the one which is likely to assist them in obtaining such a desirable consummation." The scathing power of this, and of countless similar passages, can only be matched by the more famous speeches of the Budget Election, and by the great orations of Joseph Chamberlain in the heyday of his Radical strength. For Chamberlain, be it remembered, had said things just as vitriolic about the propertied classes. And Chamberlain was not an obscure back-bencher of thirty when he delivered the series of incendiary speeches which shocked his own leaders hardly less than they did the Tories; he was a Cabinet Minister, and well advanced in middle life.

But intemperate as many of these speeches appear to us to-day, when no political question seems capable of arousing so much enthusiasm, and when our foremost Ministers deal with great issues in the matter-of-fact manner of city councillors discussing renovations to the Town Hall, there is no disputing the fact that they were received with frantic delight by a Liberal Party out of power, and beginning to suffer from the rough side of the tongue of their former champion, the Member for West Birmingham. In the autumn of 1891, the Liberal Federation held its annual meetings in Newcastle, where so many important political pronouncements used to be made in those days. "The speech of the evening," declared the best-known of local newspapers, "was decidedly that of Mr. Lloyd George, the Member for the Caernarvon Boroughs. He soon had the meeting with him, and in a light, clear voice, with something

resembling an Irish tone in it, he delivered a speech remarkable not only for its force of argument, but for its patriotism, its eloquence, and its singular picturesqueness of style and action. It sufficed in itself to give distinction to the meeting." It was little more than twelve months since he had made his first speech in England!

In 1888 Lloyd George had taken a step at least as important as his entrance into Parliament: he had married Margaret Owen. This girl was the daughter of a substantial farmer living at Mynydd Ednyfed, on the outskirts of Criccieth. She belonged to a social stratum higher than that of the shoemaker's adopted son, and between them there existed the further not inconsiderable barrier of difference of religion; for Margaret Owen's people were strict Calvinistic Methodists. Nevertheless, a friendship developed between these two young people, who had known one another more or less from earliest childhood; and when Lloyd George had begun to lay the foundation of a substantial legal practice, there seemed to be no reason why they should not be united.

"Maggie," as she was known among her friends, was Welsh of the Welsh, claiming descent on both sides from some of the notables of Wales in bygone days. Her parents were famed for their simple piety, strong character, and sterling worth. The wedding took place in Pencaenewydd chapel, a small hamlet midway between Criccieth and Caernarvon, on January 24th, 1888. That Lloyd George, in spite of all his marvellous gifts, would hardly have emerged triumphant from the many perils which beset his path during the quarter of a century following his marriage without the wise counsel, the inability to be "spoilt" by success, and the level-headed common sense of this good

woman, is the confident belief of all who possess a fairly intimate knowledge of the statesman's private life. She kept him true, at all times, to the big simple things which meant everything to her, and upon which all that is lasting in his own life's work has been built:—simple home life, the affairs of the chapel ("Pethau'r Capel"), Wales—its scenery, its language, its people, and its ancient ways—and the cause of the humble and the downtrodden. Everybody has always known that Dame Margaret, if offered the choice between a dukedom and a palace on the one hand, and her quiet home and simple friends at Criccieth on the other, would choose the latter without a moment's hesitation. The besetting danger of the man who rises by self-help from the very bottom to the very top is to forget the old friends, the old loyalties, the old landmarks, of the days of small things. It would be grossly unfair to suggest, without one particle of proof, that Lloyd George would have yielded to this danger even if his wife's influence had not been always there to help him to make the right choice. At the same time, full credit must be given to her for the fact that her influence always was exerted on the right side. It is constantly being said that some of Lloyd George's contemporaries have been spoilt by their wives; inasmuch as they led them from the Puritanism and the sturdy Radicalism in which they had been nurtured, and in which lay their real strength, into exotic ways of life and thought; which fact, in process of time, not only undermined their influence in the country, but also seriously impaired their characters. Be that as it may, Lloyd George saved himself from all danger of such a catastrophe on the day when he united his fortunes to those of a simple God-fearing Welsh farm girl, who never ceased to believe that a simple God-fearing Welsh farm girl was the best thing in the world to be. On the

occasion of the presentation to Mrs. Lloyd George of a portrait of her husband, some twenty-five years later, Sir Ellis Griffith, a friend and colleague of a lifetime, put the matter thus: "If Mr. Lloyd George had married another person, things might have gone differently with him. To have married a Welshwoman who sympathised with her husband's aims for the people, and who has been faithful in her traditions to her own people, has proved to Mr. Lloyd George a tremendous asset both in his public and private life, and in his great position."

The honeymoon was spent in London; and it was only a drizzling rain which prevented the illuminations which the people of Criccieth had arranged, more in honour of the bride than the bridegroom, from taking full effect. On their return the newly-married couple settled down in a simple semi-detached villa, called "Brynawel", on the outskirts of Criccieth in the direction of Portmadoc. And there, with the waters of Cardigan Bay at their door, and with a superb view of the Merionethshire mountains beyond, they continued to dwell, save when in London, until "Brynawelon" was built in 1908. After a few months, their first son—Richard—was born; and he was followed a year later by a daughter—Mair. Olwen, Gwilym, and Megan brought the total number of children to five. Four only were to reach maturity: Mair—best beloved of them all—died in 1907.

At the time of the marriage there was at least no immediate prospect of a seat in Parliament; and as he was wholly dependent upon his professional earnings, earnings which were exclusively derived from the neighbourhood of Criccieth, for the wherewithal to maintain his family, Lloyd George appears, for the time being, to have dismissed political activities from his mind. Circumstances, however, soon played havoc with this surrender of a





MR. LLOYD GEORGE AT THE TIME OF HIS MARRIAGE.

cherished dream ; and the generous support of his brother enabled him to take the momentous step of migrating to London. In those days Parliament did not sit so long, nor so frequently, as it has been in the habit of doing in the post-War years. Without neglecting any of his duties at Westminster, Lloyd George could count upon being able to spend at least one-half of every year at Criccieth, attending to his practice. He was also able to found a London branch of the firm ; and that, as time went on, became a source of considerable emolument. But so difficult did he find the situation at first, that he seriously considered being called to the Bar. He even went so far as to enter his name at the Middle Temple ; but beyond that he took no further step. Almost from the start he regarded politics as a whole-time job ; and he had no intention of coming day after day to the House of Commons with a tired body and mind, having already given his best to the courts of law.

In the case of Mrs. Lloyd George, to go and live in London meant a sacrifice of many of the things she cared for most deeply. For she possessed, and still possesses, an unusual amount of the Welshman's love of his native heath. At Criccieth she knew every bush and every stone. Its people were all her intimate friends. The life of the little town was her life. To leave all that, and to go and live in the metropolis, all of whose people and whose landmarks would be unfamiliar and alien, appalled her. The meteoric rise of Lloyd George to the highest position in the State could not, of course, at that date, even be guessed at ; but it may be doubted whether, if some magician had been able to remove for her the curtain which hid the future, and she had clearly seen its dazzling splendour, Mrs. Lloyd George would have chosen it at the cost of leaving the quiet rural home, surrounded by her children and all the friends of childhood, and with her husband always available when the

office had been closed for the day. The attitude of Sir Edward Grey's first wife towards her husband's public career was precisely the same.

Not that Mrs. Lloyd George was ever a recluse, or in the least inaccessible. On the contrary, something like open house was always kept for the troops of friends, private, professional and political, who crowded about Lloyd George then, as they have done ever since. He was ever a lover of good living. His views on temperance served to banish all intoxicants from the table; but food there always was in plenty, and that the best which the family budget enabled them to buy. The habit of inviting friends to breakfast (so outrageous in the eyes of late risers!) contracted by Lloyd George in later years, was then unthought of. For he had to be at his office early in the morning. But when the day's work was done, it was seldom that one or more friends, from near or far, did not join the family at the supper table. Many of these habits perforce disappeared when the home was transferred to London. But the metropolis has a very intense Welsh life. There are numerous, and well-attended, Welsh chapels, and Welsh societies of many kinds. Into this Welsh life in London Mrs. Lloyd George has always entered to the full.

Lloyd George's second Parliamentary contest was fought in June, 1892. It was bad luck that he, who had so little money to spare, and who had rejected the offer of his admirers in the Caernarvon Boroughs to defray his election expenses, should after an interval of only two years have been put to a repetition of the cost. His opponent this time was Sir John Puleston, a Welshman, and Constable of Caernarvon Castle, who at the moment was Conservative Member for Devonport. Sir John was popular with both sides in the constituency, and in many respects a redoubtable

antagonist. He was no narrow Tory of the local squire type, but a man of wide sympathies, and with some understanding of the aspirations of Wales. Nevertheless, the result of the contest was never in doubt; and Lloyd George was returned with a majority of 196. The Conservatives had lost heavily all over the country; and when in the reassembled House of Commons Asquith moved a vote of censure on the Government, the motion was carried by a majority of forty. Salisbury at once resigned, and Gladstone entered upon his last spell of office. Next to Gladstone himself, the leading members of the Liberal Government were Rosebery and Harcourt, between whom a disastrous and acrimonious rivalry was already developing. Younger men were also there—Campbell-Bannerman, Asquith, Grey, and Haldane. But most interesting of all from Lloyd George's point of view was the inclusion of Tom Ellis as a Junior Lord of the Treasury. The fact that Ellis's hands were now tied by his official position left the leadership of Nationalist Wales vacant; and no one could so well fill the gap as Lloyd George.

In many respects the new Parliament was an unpleasant one. The Unionists still pretended to be Liberals in all things save Irish Home Rule, and they continued to sit on the Government side of the House. In truth, however, their total conversion to Conservatism was going on apace; and feeling between them and the members of their old Party was far more bitter than that between Tories and Liberals. Chamberlain, the arch-renegade, seemed to delight in going out of his way to be offensive to his late comrades-in-arms; and already he was beginning to preach the plutocratic Imperialism which was anathema to every sound Liberal. Then, too, it was not an agreeable sight, though often an inspiring one, to see the aged Prime Minister, with eyes and ears rapidly failing, spending the last

months of his long official life in fighting so hopeless a cause as that of Home Rule ; harassed on the one side by the Irish Nationalists, and on the other by Conservatives and Unionists, with the Queen in the background ever ready to find fault. Inside the Cabinet also (though, of course, not much of that could have been known to the back-bencher from Caernarvonshire) things were far from pleasant. There were serious differences of opinion between Gladstone and some of his most influential colleagues ; and all its members were preparing to range themselves behind either Rosebery or Harcourt, in readiness for a change of leadership which they were well aware could not be much longer postponed.

Taking but little heed of these feuds, open and latent, in Cabinet and Parliament, Lloyd George went on his way, concentrating upon the big issues which he had most at heart—Welsh Nationalism, and Disestablishment. For the game which he was now bent upon playing, the circumstances were particularly propitious—a divided Ministry, depending upon a precarious majority in the House of Commons. It was evident to everybody that the Irish Party had the power of compelling the Government to proceed with Home Rule ; and it was equally obvious that they had every intention of putting the interests of Ireland first, and those of Liberalism in general second. The position as it affected Wales was, as Lloyd George saw it, precisely the same. At the General Election Wales had returned 31 Liberals out of a total representation of 34 ; and as the Government's majority was only 40, it seemed very likely that these 31 Welsh Liberals, voting together in support of Welsh measures, and willing to go to the extreme of turning out the Government if it refused to do their behest, would be able to hold the whip hand. There was already some disappointment in Wales over the fact that no Welshman had been given a seat in the Cabinet. It

is true that Tom Ellis was Second Whip in 1892, and Chief Whip in the Rosebery Administration of 1894; but those positions seemed to keen Welsh Nationalists to be insufficient as honours, and to be positively harmful, inasmuch as they tied Ellis's hands while giving him little or no power to influence the policy of the Government.

Englishmen, despite the fact that they possess a great gift for political democracy, and notwithstanding the fact that they themselves developed a strong national consciousness long before the majority of other European peoples, have always been amazingly slow in perceiving the existence of a similar consciousness elsewhere; and this curious blindness has gone far to nullify the excellent work of empire building which they have to their credit. Their honesty cannot well be doubted; and when an overwhelming and irresistible Home Rule movement has burst upon them—in Ireland, in Egypt, in India, in Iraq, in Palestine, in Persia—they have been genuinely surprised. And in the last decade of the nineteenth century, Englishmen in general were slow to realise the fact that Wales had become fully self-conscious as a nation, and that like all peoples in the first fervour of newly-born nationalism, Welshmen were particularly touchy and suspicious in all matters affecting national honour. They were out to challenge the assumption that the term "England" should be deemed to include Wales. On the contrary, they argued, Wales had its own needs, its own characteristics, its own aspirations and ideals; from which it followed that a common Liberalism would not fit both England and the Principality. As recently as 1886 the Bishop of St. David's had declared that Wales was only a "geographical expression", when arguing that you could no more disestablish the Church in Wales than you could disestablish it in the Lake District, or the West Country. Such sentiments as that, together with the whole theory of

uniformity which lay behind them, dating back to the reigns of the first Tudor sovereigns, were felt to constitute an affront to the Welsh nation as it was in 1892. And when it is borne in mind that it was a Welsh bishop who used the offensive expression, it becomes obvious why the Anglican Church should have come to be regarded as by far the most powerful enemy of Welsh Nationalism. The English Government was situated at a distance, and would in any case exercise hostility only now and again; but the Church was present in the midst, every rectory and vicarage, not to mention bishops' palaces, being alien fortresses from which radiated all those foreign influences which had for so long been sapping the vitality of the Welsh spirit.

Lloyd George's position was consistent throughout: Wales was Welsh first, and Liberal second; and the duty of its Parliamentary representatives was to hold a pistol to the head of all Governments indifferently, and to compel them to acknowledge the claims of the Principality. He strongly suspected that the Liberal leaders, from Gladstone down, had no serious intention of dealing practically with these claims; and with regard to Gladstone, in particular, he refused to believe that so ardent a Churchman, despite his Irish Church policy, could have any real desire to disestablish and disendow the Church in Wales.

The better to further the interests of Wales, an organisation called *Cymru Fydd* ("Wales-to-be" or "Young Wales") was founded. Its programme comprised Disestablishment and Disendowment, Land Reform, Control of the Liquor Traffic, Education, and Local Self-Government. A periodical began to be published, called *Young Wales*, under the editorship of John Hugh Edwards, to propagate this progressive gospel, and branches of the organisation were established all over Wales. Many of the older generation of Welsh Liberals frowned upon these

activities as savouring of disloyalty to the Party; and, needless to say, no Welsh Conservative had anything for them except the most unqualified scorn. Nevertheless, the vast majority of the younger people of Wales heartily approved, and the movement went from strength to strength.

This great cause, which was of his own choosing, called forth the very best that Lloyd George had to give; for it appealed to his creative imagination, his idealism, and his passion for defending small peoples denied their rights by more powerful ones. He was indefatigable in the work of popularising the principles of *Cymru Fydd*, speaking again and again in every part of Wales. There was nothing nebulous, or merely sentimental, in those speeches; they were a fine blend of passion, and economics, used in the service of the highest order of political ideals; and they were always focussed upon the half-dozen practical reforms which were the dominant issues of the hour. Even at this distance of time those speeches of 1894 and 1895 make good reading: they are eloquent, witty, and vibrant with a passionate sincerity which cannot be questioned. Never has the case for Welsh Nationalism been presented with more cogency and persuasive power. Later critics have tended to allude to Lloyd George as a lost leader. His name is held in but little respect by the Welsh Nationalist Party of to-day. He is accused of having abandoned the cause by which he had raised himself to power as soon as he himself had reached the goal of Parliamentary success. What amount of substance there is in the charge is a question which will have to be considered in due course. This much must be admitted at once: Lloyd George has never been one of those political fundamentalists whose creed never changes decade after decade. On the surface, and in outward forms, he has been inconsistent beyond possibility of



doubt. But there is another sort of consistency, a consistency of aim, as distinct from that of means; and that Lloyd George has been lacking in that respect is by no means so clearly proved. Never, even when dilating most eloquently upon the excellence of Welsh Nationalism, did he suggest that there was not a wider, and more important, nationalism; one in which both Englishmen and Welshmen could, and ought to, share.

In the forefront of the Welsh demands stood Disestablishment and Disendowment. There were, and there still are, Liberals in England who favour, on abstract principles, a similar measure applied to the Anglican Church in its own country. But the arguments by which they lay store were not those which affected the people of Wales. Lloyd George and his followers wanted to dethrone the Church—first, because it was the Church of a tiny minority of the Welsh people, and yet enjoyed a monopoly of emolument, as well as every honour and privilege that the State can confer in the ecclesiastical sphere. The humdrum bishop of a Welsh diocese enjoyed a big income, and might sit in the House of Lords; while the greatest of Welsh Nonconformist preachers, a man who was in every sense a prophet and a national leader, would think himself fortunate if he had an income of £200 a year, a watertight cottage, and the society of peasants who, in the main, composed his flock. Secondly, the Church was, in most matters, the enemy of Welsh Nationalism. Clergymen, it is true, had enriched Welsh literature; but it was as private individuals that they had done so, and none of them had received any sort of preferment. The type of Welsh clergyman who found himself on the Episiscopal bench, or in a canon's stall, was almost invariably an agent of Anglicisation, despising all things Welsh, ignorant of the language, the literature, and the traditions of the people. Thirdly, it was believed that the

Church was, in effect, just an ally of the squirearchy, an institution existing for the propagation of snobbery, and the duty of obedience to one's "betters". In the past two centuries at least the Church had done absolutely nothing for Wales, and yet it drew rich revenues from the country. Did not justice require that at least a portion of these misused and unearned emoluments should be devoted to things which really did pertain to the welfare of the Welsh nation?

Down to 1892 Welsh Disestablishment had been just so much election window-dressing on the part of skilled Liberal agents. Chamberlain was known to believe in it sincerely; for as recently as 1887 he had strongly advocated it in the pages of a Baptist journal. But then, Chamberlain was a Unitarian, and the friend of R. W. Dale, H. W. Crosskey, John Morley, and other "Godless" men of that sort! The true-blue Conservative, at all events, understood only too well the value of the Established Church as a political ally, and he had no mind to injure his own fortunes by diminishing its influence. As for Gladstone and his aristocratic Liberal colleagues, they took the view that there was something a little indecent, if not even sacrilegious, in this campaign on the part of Welsh Nonconformists against the venerable institution of which they were all at least nominal members. It consequently came about that Welsh Disestablishment, although it figured as often as not in the Liberal election addresses of the period, was never taken seriously by any Prime Minister when announcing his programme of measures for the session. It was Lloyd George's supreme contribution to the cause that he made it a live issue, one which every Liberal Government would be compelled to treat with all due seriousness, and to put in its programme of urgent reforms. "How are we to find a way out of this maze?" he inquired in 1893; "Mr.

Gladstone says 'By being patient'. For my part, I shall be quite satisfied if we get Disestablishment next year." "A Welsh Disestablishment Bill," he declared on a public platform in Wales, "will be through the House of Commons next year, or the Liberal Ministry will not be there." However dubious Welsh Liberals may have been regarding the propriety of forming a *Cymru Fydd* organisation side by side with the Liberal political machine, there was complete and enthusiastic unanimity in favour of Disestablishment.

Lloyd George's impatience, an impatience which he had also succeeded in imparting to Welsh Liberals generally, was viewed with deep vexation by Gladstone; and even Tom Ellis considered it a little unreasonable. When pressed to withdraw his support from Home Rule unless Disestablishment was immediately promised, Ellis flatly refused. In the following year Gladstone made place for Rosebery as Prime Minister, and the prospects for Disestablishment at once began to grow brighter. The new head of the Government went out of his way in a speech to give an explicit assurance that a bill would be passed through all its stages in the Commons before the next General Election. That promise was regarded by Lloyd George as an immense victory; and, incidentally, as a complete vindication of his own policy of pressure.

The first Welsh Disestablishment and Disendowment Bill was introduced in a weighty speech by the Home Secretary—Mr. Asquith—on March 26th; and in the debate which took place on the second reading in April, Mr. Lloyd George sought an opportunity for setting forth the complete Welsh case. He was on perfectly familiar ground. The arguments which he used had already done duty on a hundred platforms in Wales; but they were mostly new to members of the House of Commons. As in the case of all his Disestablishment speeches, right down to 1914, there was tremendous

passion, which seemed to consume everything which stood in its way. He assailed the English Church as the enemy of the nation, and the oppressor of the common people. It would be idle to deny that there was an immense amount of bitterness in this speech, and in the many which followed it on the same theme in after years. Balfour rose at once to castigate him for it; and even the friendly *Manchester Guardian* next day commented, though not unkindly, upon the extraordinary resentment and animosity which the speech displayed. But unlike the Tory politicians, the great newspaper was able to extract the right moral: "Mr. Lloyd George's speech," it declared, "will be a revelation to most Englishmen of the unsuspected depths of passionate animosity entertained by the Welsh masses for the English Church in Wales. The temper may be bitter, and it may be unjust, but it clearly exists in formidable strength, and it is a good thing that Englishmen should be left under no illusion on that point. There may be reasons for maintaining the Anglican Church in Wales, but there is against it at all events this reason, that it is a source of fierce resentment and exasperation to the majority of Welshmen. Like all Celtic peoples, like all peoples who have had a hard struggle to resist absorption, the Welsh have long memories, and their indictment against the Church goes back for eight centuries or more." But when a leading Liberal newspaper was as tepid in its sympathy as this editorial suggests the *Manchester Guardian* to have been, can one wonder that Lloyd George and his more zealous friends felt sure that nothing short of coercion would ever induce an English Ministry, of no matter what political complexion, to run risks for the cause on which Wales had set its heart?

The first Disestablishment Bill passed its second reading by a majority of forty-four. True to his old principles in

this matter at least, Chamberlain voted in its favour. What the fate of the measure in the Commons would ultimately have been, it is idle to speculate. Most certainly it would, in any case, have been rejected by the Lords. As it happened, while the Bill was still in committee, the Liberal Government was defeated and for eleven years the advocates of Welsh Disestablishment were relegated to the Opposition benches. "The Bill has been buried," cried Lloyd George, "but buried in the sure and certain hope of a glorious resurrection." He further argued that the defeat of the Liberal Government was a powerful argument in favour of Welsh Home Rule. Wales was fully ripe for a full programme of progressive legislation, including Irish Home Rule; and in that respect, as it turned out, was eleven years at least in advance of England. Was it fair, argued Lloyd George, to keep an enlightened country like Wales waiting so long while the slow-witted predominant partner moved into line?

In point of bitterness the struggle over Disestablishment in the House of Commons was only the pale shadow of the contest in the Welsh constituencies. It is no exaggeration to say that this unhappy question poisoned the public life of the Principality for twenty-five years.

But there is no gainsaying the fact that Wales found itself as a nation through the Disestablishment campaign. Abstract patriotism is apt to be an empty thing, appealing only to a few intellectuals: the common people can only be brought to feel as one by the stirring appeal of some great grievance or injustice. The orators and writers of *Cymru Fydd* might have gone on preaching the principles of nationality for decades; and the electorate would hardly have shown a ripple on its placid surface. But in every village in the land the position of the parson was perceived to be an unjustifiable, and frequently a scandalous, one. Every plain

man could see that the Church was an English one ; and that the Welsh people were being treated as an insignificant appendage to their more powerful neighbour. Some dislike of the Anglican Church on theological grounds there undoubtedly was ; though such feeling was rapidly disappearing in the face of the growing tolerance, or indifference, characteristic of the twentieth century. The real motive behind the demand for Disestablishment was nationalism. That Lloyd George knew quite well ; and so, instead of basing his speeches upon abstract principles of theology, and ecclesiastical polity, he based them purely and simply upon the right of Wales to have what Church it chose.

Most of the bitterness engendered by the struggle was due to the uncompromising stand taken by the Welsh bishops. That they should fight on behalf of their monopolies and privileges was, perhaps, only to be expected ; but that they should descend, as they did, to the vocabulary of the gutter, deny obvious facts, and disseminate false statistics, is what we have every right to condemn them for doing. They debased the currency of political argument. They showed themselves utterly unsympathetic towards Welsh National ideals, contemptuous of Welsh culture, and totally incapable of realising the great things that had been done for the country by the Nonconformist bodies.

Lloyd George threw himself with the utmost gusto into the fray. Of the genuineness of his convictions there can be no manner of doubt. Had he not been taught from earliest years by his uncle to regard Nonconformity as the true religion, and the Establishment as a travesty ? And had he not himself come to realise, as he grew to manhood, that the alliance of parson and squire in the Welsh countryside would effectually block all progress, national and social ? As in the case of every other orator of the first rank, Lloyd George's speeches have been great in proportion to

the honesty and intensity of conviction underlying them. A politician is obliged to speak on many subjects which, although he may not disapprove, still do not rouse him in any way. And in the case of politicians who merely speak to a brief, reading in steady and dispassionate tones what has been written by themselves or others in cold blood, it matters not at all, so far as the quality of the speech is concerned, whether they are, in their heart of hearts, for the plaintiff or for the defendant. But great orators are not made that way. They are great because their words flow like molten lava from a fire burning within. And on the subject of Welsh Disestablishment Lloyd George was always aflame. The result is that his speeches on that topic are among the finest that he ever made. His two principal antagonists were the Bishop of St. Asaph (afterwards first Archbishop of Wales), and the Bishop of St. David's; the former an Anglicised Welsh aristocrat, without a grain of sympathy with anything Welsh, and with scarcely the ability to speak the language correctly; the latter a poor farm boy from a Nonconformist home, who had by sheer ability won his way to the Episcopal bench, a mighty fighter, but one also who, in spite of a venomous tongue, and the wounds which he inflicted with it, never forfeited the liking of even his sworn antagonists.

Lloyd George and the Bishop of St. Asaph followed one another up and down the country, provoking one another, answering each other's speeches, and indulging in invective which went far beyond what is commonly allowed in political controversy. "For my part," declared Lloyd George in the course of a speech, "not a word of courtesy in allusion to the bishop or his minions shall fall from my lips. The bishop is the Yahoo of political controversy, who ought to be treated as such." That is certainly fighting with the buttons off the foils. But it was cheered to the

echo by Welsh Nonconformist Liberals who felt that here, at last, was a real fighter to lead them into battle, one who would never quail before bishop or squire, or even before the mighty ones of Westminster with the Grand Old Man himself at their head.

Mingled with fierce invective, however, we find much of the picturesque imagery which has always constituted the principal charm of Lloyd George's finest speeches. "Have you ever observed a plantation on a storm-beaten hillside?" he asked an audience. "How the trees bend from the prevailing blast, and the branches refuse to meet its advances? How the whole growth of the forest seems to be one consistent effort to escape from the blight which comes from that quarter? This is how Wales shuns the Established Church. All the persecution of our little Wales has proceeded from that quarter. In farm and quarry, in school-room and courtroom, its blight has been on the land, and the whole growth of the national life seems to be one constant strain towards escaping from its withering influences. And now, when the fabrics of Dissent shelter us from the unwelcome blasts, we do not intend to permit the protecting edifices to crumble into ruin, not even to propitiate all the rack-renting squirearchy in Christendom."

The Bishop of St. Asaph had been foolish enough to declare that even if they were given legal equality with the clergy, Nonconformist ministers would never be admitted to social equality. Immediate and devastating was Lloyd George's retort: "What is this social paradise out of which Nonconformist ministers are to be for ever barred, and in which the clergy, like cherubim and seraphim, are dressed in white gowns and are armed with flaming swords? It is a close corporation which slams the door in the face of honest toil, where idleness is regarded as a badge of nobility, and where the highest prizes are given to him who can count the



longest lineage of ancestors who have continued to live luxuriously upon the labour of others. That is the Bishop of St. Asaph's ideal of religious equality; but such an ideal I despise. And I should despise the Nonconformist minister who was desirous of emulating the present type of Establishment curate, who would ape the manners and airs of sanctified society prigs, who degenerates into a mere drawing-room apostle, whose ideal of preaching would be a compound of Jeremy Taylor and Mrs. Grundy, and who imagines that he could save the world by a liberal application of Coleman's starch and five o'clock teas." These, and their like, are hard sayings; but they needed uttering in Victorian Wales; for there was in the Principality even thirty years ago a vast amount of contemptible clerical snobbishness that could only be purged by fierce sarcasm and bitter ridicule. For it was ludicrous in the extreme that a loutish and ignorant parson (and there were many hundred such), proud of being allowed to sit at the squire's table, whose talk was all of hunting and of common parish gossip, who read nothing except newspapers and flimsy novels, and who failed to attract by his professional ministrations more than one in ten of the parishioners whom he was paid to care for, should arrogate to himself a position of superiority over the highly educated, cultured, and influential men of whom there were so many in the ranks of the Nonconformist ministry.

W. T. Stead used to relate a story about those sparring matches between Lloyd George and the Bishop of St. Asaph. Lloyd George was appearing on a platform which, a few days before, had been spoken from by the bishop. "We are met together to-night," said the chairman, "for the purpose of listening to Mr. Lloyd George's reply to the speech given in our town last week by the Bishop of St. Asaph. The bishop is the biggest liar in all Wales. But

thank God, yes, thank God, we have a match for him in Mr. Lloyd George." It is now maintained that Stead invented this story, and that it had no foundation in fact. True it is, however, in this sense : it indicates clearly what each side in the controversy thought of the leading protagonist of the other !

## CHAPTER SIX

### THE WIDER OUTLOOK [1895-1899]

THE final retirement of Gladstone, and the defeat of Rosebery in 1895, are events which mark the close of an epoch. And that is true whether we think of Liberals or of Conservatives. For the latter, the difficult period of alliance with Liberal Unionists was at an end; and a united party could now proceed to govern the country on the uninspiring lines of Lord Salisbury's Toryism. Soon the Imperialism of Chamberlain, Milner, and Rhodes was to give a new, and more romantic, turn to foreign policy, which, in the hands of the veteran leader, had been apt to be sluggish and dull. Great things were afoot in the foreign field—the fall of Bismarck, the consolidating of the Triple Alliance, the founding of the Dual Alliance, and the slow drift of England out of isolation into the French and Japanese orbit. For the Liberal Party also, change was the order of the day. The old leaders—Gladstone, Hartington, Chamberlain—had disappeared; and new men—Asquith, Grey, Haldane, Morley, John Burns, and others—were now the torchbearers. Hitherto Nonconformists and temperance advocates, in alliance with a select Whig group, had constituted the backbone of the party; but social reformers were now beginning to appear on the scenes; men who cared less than the Old Guard for the amenities of public life, for the susceptibilities of the Court, and for the privileges of birth and station. These men were determined to make of England a real democracy, by abolishing privilege, equalising

wealth, and giving the poor boy as good a chance in life as a rich one. They knew that, in pursuit of these ideals, the House of Lords, the citadel of everything that is denoted by unearned riches and unmerited power, would offer every possible resistance; but they were more than willing to face the issue. That is why a conflict between Lords and Commons was always in the minds of Liberal politicians from 1895 onwards. Even Gladstone, little as he was of an idol-breaker, had felt the power of the Lords to offer a permanent barrier to the often-declared wishes of the people to be an indefensible anachronism.

But although all Liberals perceived the outrageously unjust way in which our Parliamentary institutions worked so long as there was a permanent Conservative majority in the House of Lords, making the latter—as Lloyd George wittily remarked—"the watchdog of the Constitution" when a Liberal Ministry was in power, and "Mr. Balfour's poodle" when the Government was a Tory one, there was yet a big difference between the attitude of the well-born and opulent Liberals towards the grievance, and the attitude of the cottage-bred men who were now coming to the front. Palmerston and Hartington, Gladstone, Campbell-Bannerman, Rosebery and Edward Grey belonged just as much to the aristocratic section of the community as did Salisbury, Lansdowne, and Balfour. And for that reason, however genuine might be their sympathy with the poor and down-trodden, they never envisaged a complete social upheaval. They accepted our social system as it was, and, at the most, aimed only at smoothing away some of its worst abuses. Consequently, when any question arose in which the country tended to be divided according to social status, they were to be found, on the whole, in complete agreement with each other. It was an axiom, accepted equally by Liberals and Tories, that nothing must be done to upset seriously the

existing order. Poor men and rich men there must still be; only the rich, said Liberals, must be compelled to part with a little more of their money for the benefit of the poor. Crown, nobility, upper-middle, middle, and lower classes—there you had the wonderful social structure which had made England great; and no sacrilegious hand must be placed upon it. And since they accepted all that, whenever any such question as that of the crushing of the power of the House of Lords was raised, Liberals and Conservatives regarded it always as part of a much bigger question—what will be the effect of this tinkering with our ancient Constitution upon the proper gradation of social classes? Chamberlain had shown none of this "respect for a lord"; and for that reason, his ways and his words had been just as distasteful to Gladstone as they had been to Queen Victoria and Lord Salisbury. For the Chamberlain of 1885 was a typical representative of the newer view, the view which held that, in the main, our social system was a very bad one, and that measures directed at its undermining were to be cordially welcomed. He, and others who thought as he did, kept an open mind where revolutions were concerned, instead of being horrified by the very name. Revolutions might be pernicious; but with equal likelihood they might be beneficial. Alone among the more "respectable" Liberals of the Gladstonian era, John Morley agreed with Chamberlain in his attitude towards established things. Both men had associated much with the leaders of free thought, and social and political revolution, in Paris; and they loathed the authoritarian, hierarchical, and aristocratic politics of the Central European States. Chamberlain, however, had now gone over to the enemy; and Morley himself, as he grew older, seems to have been far more interested in political theory than in the concrete measures proposed for bringing about a greater measure of liberty and equality in

England. There was room for a man of ability, energy, eloquence, and real conviction, to lead the rapidly awakening masses. It was into that vacancy that Lloyd George was to step.

In the closing years of the nineteenth century there was, in spite of the deceptive appearance created by Chamberlain's Imperialism and the Boer War, a real awakening of the British working classes. They had won the franchise and the secret vote ; but instead of regarding these things as a goal, they considered them to be only a starting-point. A vote was worth nothing unless it could be used to compel the prosperous ones to disgorge, and the privileged ones to surrender their unfair advantages. There was appearing among the wage-earners a definite harking back to the mediaeval conception of liberty, as consisting more in things economic than in things political. As yet those who believed that the working classes ought to have their own party, with leaders from their own ranks, were comparatively few in number : the vast majority thought that the Liberal Party could be captured, and made to serve the ends of Labour. Round about 1895 the tide was rising. The old orthodox Liberalism was largely discredited. People were getting a little tired of the eternal harping on Home Rule, Disestablishment, Temperance, Non-sectarian Education, and all the rest of the familiar Liberal repertoire ; and were longing to clean the slate, though assuredly not quite in the way in which Lord Rosebery meant it to be done when he employed that famous phrase. The new Liberalism was to make drastic social reform its principal aim ; and if a moribund institution like the House of Lords dared to block the way, it must be overthrown, though the whole fabric of society should rock in consequence.

For Lloyd George 1895 also marks an epoch. Hitherto he had been just a Welshman, immersed in the affairs of

Wales, and intervening in English politics only for the purpose of self-advancement, and in order to win the kind of power in the House of Commons which would enable him to battle more effectively on behalf of the special claims of the Principality. But this year saw a change in him. At the General Election the Liberals had suffered a heavy defeat. Some of their best men—such as Morley and Harcourt—had been beaten in their old constituencies, and been forced to fly for political refuge, the one to Scotland, and the other to Wales. And reading the signs of the times with that searching glance which never seems to have made a mistake until, in my view, its vision was impaired completely and finally in the Great War, Lloyd George came to the conclusion that the old Liberalism was losing its hold upon the people, and would never have power enough to pass into law the measures long overdue unless it imported fresh strength from some quarter. Promptly and accurately he divined the only quarter from which such accession of strength was to be expected: it would come from the longing of the working classes for drastic social reforms, and for a bold challenging of the forces of privilege and monopoly. In a flash he saw a new vision—the vision of the peasants of Wales united with the working classes of England in a great crusade for their own emancipation. They were, indeed, very different; but out of the common need, unity would spring. Thus the aims of the champion of Wales became merged in the wider aims of the champion of the lower classes of both nations. To say (as many of his critics said then, and as has been said, with much less excuse, more recently) that Lloyd George forgot Wales, is not merely an untruth, it is a gross misreading of the whole situation, arguing a complete inability to interpret the movement of history. He remembered Wales all the time; but his unerring political instinct told him that the interests of Wales could best be served by

identifying them with those of the rising English democracy. Undoubtedly he was right. The need for higher wages, shorter hours of work, better houses, old age pensions, insurance against sickness and unemployment, taxation of unearned increment, progressive taxation of large incomes, control of the land by the community—all these, and many similar things, know nothing of national frontiers. It was only slowly that Lloyd George shook himself free from the bonds of a narrow nationalism; but the process of emancipation began in 1895, to the great advantage of Wales as well as England.

It is interesting to note that Chamberlain, on his side of the House, though now in all essentials a Tory, perceived that the virtue had gone out of the Conservative Party. The period from 1895 to 1899 was completely without inspiration. Parliamentary routine was gone through. Measures, about which not even their sponsors cared very much, were endlessly debated and eventually carried. The country was in one of its moods of political listlessness. There was no outcry against the prevailing stagnation. Chamberlain, however, though he may have changed his creed, had not changed his temperament; nor had he parted with his magnificent talent for attractive window-dressing. He believed that even the "stupid party" could be made to capture the initiative, and to win the votes of the electors, not only in one of their periods of torpor, but also when they were straining for adventure. Accordingly he be-thought him of the Empire, so long neglected by all parties as an electioneering asset; with the result that the New Imperialism which he began to proclaim soon found an echo on every Conservative platform, and completely captured the imagination of many of the leading names of the day in literature and journalism, as well as politics. No one can properly understand the history of English politics between



1895 and 1905 until he realises that Imperialism on the one hand, and Social Reform on the other, were the methods devised by Chamberlain and Lloyd George respectively to infuse new life into the old parties. Both men were manifestly sincere; but sincerity is not incompatible with a fine sense of tactical advantage and political strategy.

For Lloyd George personally, the election of 1895 had been another triumph. This time, his old antagonist, Mr. Ellis Nanney, was the Conservative candidate. Lloyd George welcomed the fact, feeling that for a man like himself, who delighted in clear-cut issues, it was easier to fight an out-and-out Tory like Nanney than a lukewarm Conservative like Puleston, his opponent in the 1892 election. It was no longer possible to treat Lloyd George with supercilious contempt; for, however grudgingly, his opponents had to admit that he had made his mark in Parliament; and that fact made for pleasanter relations between the two candidates during the election campaign. Nanney was, in fact, a very kindly gentleman, generous and tolerant according to his lights. In 1890, the shock of being opposed and beaten by a poor lad, whose head he must often have approvingly patted in the village school, had proved greater than he could bear with equanimity, and much bitterness had been imported into the election. But five years later the shock had spent its force; and contempt for his presumptuous opponent had given place on his part to respect, as well as something akin to admiration, for the proved abilities of his humble neighbour.

The Liberals of the constituency were not altogether satisfied with their Member. There were some who maintained that he had been unduly critical of the late Liberal Administration, and that his constant harassing of it had been a major cause of its defeat. They argued that a Government which was good enough for Tom Ellis ought surely to be

good enough for every other Welshman, however patriotic ; and they knew that Ellis viewed his fiery Welsh colleague's assaults upon the Cabinet with pained disapproval. Added to this specific cause of complaint was also the general Tory reaction, the " swing of the pendulum ", which might well detach a few votes even in the Caernarvon Boroughs from the Liberal fold. After all, Lloyd George's majority in 1890 had only been eighteen ! He himself, sanguine though he always was in such matters, seems to have contemplated the possibility of defeat ; for we find him writing to one of his supporters : " Even if I were thrown out, it would not be such a dreadful thing. Parliamentary life is not such an enjoyable position as all that." In suggesting that he would easily have been able to find consolation in defeat, we may be quite sure that Lloyd George was misreading his own mind. For filled with ambition, and completely absorbed in politics, he would have moped dismally had he been extruded from the House which was fast becoming a home for him. Many have regarded political life as a duty, or a pleasant recreation ; but from the beginning Lloyd George regarded it as the main object of his existence, and to it he gave his whole time, and every ounce of his inexhaustible energy. There was no need, however, for him or his supporters to have worried ; for on the declaration of the poll he was found to have a majority of 194 over his opponent. Carried shoulder-high to Caernarvon Liberal Club, he roused the great crowd which surged about him to a frenzy of enthusiasm by shouting : " The wave of Tory reaction which has swept over England has dashed itself in vain against the rocks of Snowdonia."

The three years which elapsed between the election and the outbreak of the Boer War were, for Lloyd George, a period of steady growth in Parliamentary reputation. He was never absent from his place ; and there can be little

doubt that by the close of the period he had come to be generally regarded as the best fighting-man, the best leader of a forlorn hope, on the Opposition benches. Gladstone's mantle, unfortunately, had not obviously fallen upon any particular person's shoulders. Harcourt was the favourite of the Liberal rank and file in the House; but his colleagues in the late Government had found him difficult to work with, and were dreading the possibility of having him for a master. So strong was this fear, that even so anti-Imperialistic a statesman as John Morley used his influence against Harcourt, and in favour of Rosebery, much as he suspected and disliked the latter's leanings in foreign affairs. In the country Rosebery was, next to Gladstone, easily the most popular Liberal statesman. His brilliance dazzled, and his eloquence seduced. A devotion to racing won the hearts of an influential section of the community, while his enthusiasm for letters won for him many admirers in another quarter. Above all, he was believed to be keen upon social reform, and to be anxious to go a great deal further in that direction than the Whig magnates who were the legacy of mid-Victorian politics. With the leadership in so uncertain a plight, it was inevitable that much of the energy and time of the front benchers of the Liberal Opposition should be given to intrigues and counter-intrigues; and that left the general field of political battle clear for a man who, like Lloyd George, knew his own mind, and the things he wanted to have done, and was, on the whole, indifferent to the question of who should lead. He was, in fact, already his own leader; and his leadership soon won for him that great popular following in the country, independent of Party management, which was to be the source of his strength later on as Minister of the Crown.

Meditating over the defeat of his Party in 1895, Lloyd George quickly came to the conclusion that there was in

England a genuine fear of Irish Home Rule. There can be no doubt that Chamberlain, with his ill-digested dreams of Empire, shuddered at the thought of what might happen if the Irishmen were to set up a semi-independent parliament within a few score miles of London. For was he not on the eve of that chapter in his chameleon-like career in which he intended, even by blood and iron if need be, to weld the Empire into a closer unity. His mind was not capacious enough, nor was he endowed with sufficient political imagination, to grasp the idea of a Commonwealth, autonomous in its respective parts, and held together by nothing more than a common will to co-operate. That was the vision of the great Liberal statesman who stamped out the hatred generated by the Boer War by the creation of self-governing States which soon became the Union of South Africa. It was a vision hidden from the smaller breed of statesmen—Chamberlain, Balfour, Milner, and others—who had accustomed themselves to only one conception of Empire—that of a ruling community imposing its will by force upon subordinate ones. But unfortunately these blind leaders of the blind possessed enough influence with the English electorate to persuade it to reject Irish Home Rule; nor did it seem likely in 1895, in view of the emphatic rejection of Home Rule even when recommended by the mighty eloquence of Gladstone, that the verdict of the “predominant partner” would, at least for many years to come, be converted into an acceptance of the policy. Still less could these blind ones be made to realise that there was anything to be done with the nationalism of the little Boer States except to drown it in blood.

What then was to be done? To Lloyd George's practical mind it appeared that the best plan would be to disarm English fears and suspicion by a system of Home Rule all round. It was a notorious fact that the British Parliament

was so overburdened with duties, many of them of only local importance, that it could never catch up with its programme of work. Measures that most sensible people of all parties were in favour of had to wait their turn for years, owing to the ever-growing congestion. And it was inevitable, in such circumstances, that the weaker should go to the wall. It was also quite obvious that "the weaker" only too often signified the three countries of the "Celtic Fringe". Nor was time the only argument in favour of the plan: it was also obvious that there were many local problems, intelligible to Scots, Welshmen, and Irish, which English Members of Parliament could understand only with difficulty, if at all. And why should they devote precious time, time so badly needed for dealing with English, and Imperial, affairs, to a study of local conditions, without a thorough knowledge of which they could not hope to deal justly with the demands of the sister nations? Let there be, then, four local Parliaments, argued Lloyd George, one for England, one for Ireland, one for Scotland, and one for Wales, each entrusted with full control over all local matters. And let there further be an Imperial Parliament to co-ordinate their activities, and to deal with the wider problems of the Empire at large. His statesmanlike prescience was peering still further into the future, making his mind to dwell on the possibility, some day, of a real Imperial Parliament, one in which Australia, New Zealand, Canada, and India should be represented. Here, surely, was a political dream which rendered insignificant in comparison the crude and incoherent fancies of Joseph Chamberlain? Lloyd George's ardent Welsh nationalism was leading him logically on to the splendid goal of a Commonwealth of self-governing Dominions; and it was from the very start something entirely different from the greedy, tyrannical, and anachronistic Empire of Chamberlain and his friends.

Fortunately for England Lloyd George's vision had largely triumphed when the testing hour came in 1914. British people remember with gratitude, and it is right that they should, Campbell-Bannerman's supreme act of statesmanship in conferring self-government upon the defeated Boer Republics within five years of the close of the war; a policy which was carried in the face of the strongest opposition, and the most emphatic prophecies of evil, of the whole Conservative Party: but they do not always recollect the fact that ten years earlier Lloyd George was advocating the plan of Empire which came to be worked out with such amazingly happy results between 1906 and 1926.

As was his wont, Lloyd George devoted much time to the task of explaining his Imperial plans on popular platforms up and down the country. It was at one of these meetings, in which he was advocating his "Home Rule All Round" policy, that he made one of the most famous of his witty repartees. "I look forward to the day," he cried, "when there shall be Home Rule for England, Home Rule for Ireland, Home Rule for Scotland, and Home Rule for Wales." "Home Rule for Hell," shouted a voice from the back of the hall. Quick as lightning came Lloyd George's retort: "That's right, my good fellow, stick up for your own country." There is nothing subtle about it, but in the excited atmosphere of a crowded meeting, one can well imagine how effective it would be. Lloyd George has always maintained that it is a speaker's business to conciliate the particular audience which he happens to be addressing; and consequently to talk to a hall full of ordinary folk at Limehouse as one would to the House of Commons, is to misuse one's opportunity.

The debates in connection with the Agricultural Rating Bill which the Conservative Government introduced immediately after its return to power contributed greatly towards

consolidating Lloyd George's Parliamentary position. He was constantly on his feet, denouncing the measure, and even accusing Ministers of legislating in their own pecuniary interest. The Bill purported to be for the relief of the farmer; but it was in fact, argued Lloyd George, a Bill for putting more money into the already bulging pocket of the landlord. "What is the distress of the landlord?" he asked. "They have had to dismiss carriages; they have given up some of their game keepers and men in buttons—that is all. The landlords declare that they ask for relief, not for themselves but for the distressed farmer. That is the old trick of the professional beggar, who pretends to beg for others, and then, the moment the charitable person's back is turned, spends the money in the nearest public-house. Mr. Chaplin himself will benefit by the Bill to the tune of £700 a year." At this there was an uproar in the House, and Chaplin got up at once to declare that he would gain nothing at all by the measure. But Lloyd George refused to withdraw a single word; on the contrary, he expanded the original cause of offence into the general charge that the Cabinet as a whole would "benefit under this Bill to the extent of two-and-a-quarter million pounds. Having bled the farmer to the last drop of his blood, the landlords are now seeking to bleed the taxpayers who are to be driven into the landowners' leech-pool". Here was a very different debating from the "gentlemanly" blows which Tory and Whig magnates used to deal one another with well-simulated anger in the age that was fast drawing to its close. But it stands on record that Morley and Asquith were loud in their praise of their young colleague's onslaught on Ministers. Harcourt complimented him publicly in the House; and in private he remarked to a friend that "all the Scotch members together are not worth Lloyd George's little finger".

Harcourt's praise seems to have really come from the heart. Evidently he had been tremendously impressed, not only by the debating power, but by the general political abilities of Lloyd George; for he took him aside, and gave him the sort of advice which an elderly Parliamentarian drawing towards the close of his public career can with profit give to a young aspirant. He urged him to aim at something higher than being a free-lance, an *enfant terrible* of debate. Instead, he ought to prepare himself for the responsibilities of high office in the next Liberal Cabinet. "You are too gifted a man," he declared, "to fritter away your powers in playing the part of a mere free-lance. You are destined for much higher things." These kind words made a deep impression upon the young politician, as well they might; for the man who uttered them was the leader of his Party in the House of Commons; and it was at that time far from certain that he would not be Prime Minister.

A few months later we find the famous "Toby, M.P." paying Lloyd George a handsome compliment in the pages of *Punch*, one of the first references to him in a paper which has always dealt by him in kindly fashion. "Great triumph to-night for Lloyd George," he wrote. "Another step in successful Parliamentary career achieved by sheer ability, lived up to with unvaried modesty. To frame Instruction on going into Committee has always been, for technical reasons, work of great difficulty. To-night six Parliamentary hands essayed it, with respect to the Education Bill. The youngest alone accomplished it." The topic referred to in this quotation was the Voluntary Schools Bill of 1897. It was in essence the old quarrel—Churchmen on the one hand insisting upon the teaching of dogma in schools financed by the State, and Nonconformists objecting to it.

Those were dull years in the House of Commons; and



members were only too glad to have the proceedings enlivened by the witty, mordant, and often truculent speeches of the young Welshman. And if in consequence of some barbed shaft aimed by his cunning and bold hand a "scene" ensued, why, all the better fun for the terribly bored back-benchers on both sides of the House!

In the country Lloyd George was in as great demand as ever as a Party champion; but it would be hopeless, as it is certainly unnecessary, to try and chronicle the wellnigh innumerable triumphs which fell to his share in those days, when he had plenty of time for platform work, and when his zest for it was at its height. A reference might, perhaps, be made with advantage to a speech which he delivered in 1898 at a meeting of the National Liberal Federation, in support of electoral and Parliamentary reform. There were still, in those days, serious defects in our machinery of government; defects which had the effect of handicapping the more democratic elements, and of playing into the hands of the privileged classes of birth and wealth. And these anomalies were not confined to the House of Lords: they were to be found also in the House of Commons, particularly in the form of plural voting. That was the especial grievance fastened upon by Lloyd George in this speech. "The grand old Liberal maxim of 'trust the people' has not yet," he declared, "been fully incorporated in an Act of Parliament. We give one vote to one man, and thirty to another, and I have never been able to discover on what principles we have made this unfair distribution. We give one vote, or probably no vote at all, to the man who handles the plough, whilst we give ten votes to the man who handles the hunting-whip. We give one vote, or no vote at all, to the man who sows the seed, whilst we give ten votes to the man who neither sows nor reaps, but only consumes. One vote to the busy bee, and ten to the devouring locust. It occurs

to me that if we are going to deprive anyone of votes, we ought to start with the men who contribute nothing to the creation of the wealth and prosperity of the country. He works not ; then neither let him vote. But we must not deprive people who work hard, and risk life, health and comfort in order to contribute to the prosperity of the nation. It is not the soil, but the soul of the country that we want to be represented in the House of Commons. After all, have not the drones got a House all to themselves, which they guard as jealously as if it were a pheasant preserve ? ” The charges formulated in the passage just quoted, together with their implications, remind the reader of to-day how oligarchic a system of government Britain possessed only some thirty years ago : the presentation is oratorical and popular ; the blend of wit and passion is all Lloyd George’s own ; but the facts alleged could be substantiated out of any standard text-book of the Constitution.

Hard work at Westminster and in the country was broken into during those years by two lengthy holidays—the one to South America, and the other to Canada. Few legends about public men are more grotesquely fantastic than the one which describes Lloyd George as ignorant of books, and untravelled. Far from that being true, it may safely be averred that few of his Parliamentary contemporaries travelled more frequently, or read more widely in certain fields of literature. No one would suggest that he knew all the countries of the world as Bryce knew them, or that he had Morley’s profound acquaintance with all literature, ancient and modern. Those two brilliant men were obviously scholars first, and statesmen second. Lloyd George must be measured by a different scale ; by the standard with which we measure Bismarck and Cavour, Lincoln and Chamberlain—men who were politicians to their finger-tips, and with some tincture of contempt for the man of the study. And judged

by such a standard one may say that Lloyd George had travelled much, and read more. It is almost amusing to encounter the wondering admiration with which a London newspaper, in the year in which he first entered Parliament, stated the fact that he had read every word of Gibbon's *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*. The statement was in fact true: indeed, not only had he perused the whole of that supremely great work, but he had a most thorough and detailed knowledge of it. Years later, when he was Prime Minister, he was one day out walking with a famous classical scholar, and a dispute relating to some point of Roman history arose between them. Lloyd George quoted Gibbon in support of his view, and upon reaching home was able to take down the right volume from the shelf and instantly place his finger upon the passage. A man who was his fellow-clerk at the solicitor's office at Portmadoc has recorded the fact that Lloyd George used to have on his desk a copy of Hallam's *Constitutional History of England*, into which he would eagerly dip during every spare moment in the course of the day. Of poetry, *belles-lettres*, and fiction, his knowledge was, perhaps, scanty; but in his chosen fields of history, biography and travel, his conquests were wide and deep; and his marvellously retentive memory enabled him to master once and for all the contents of all the books which he read.

During his early years, poverty made it impossible for Lloyd George ever to travel abroad. Even his January honeymoon had perforce to be spent at the mercy of the ungenial weather of this country. But even as a boy he had been in the habit of devouring every book of travel upon which he could lay his hands; and he had dreamed of a time coming when he, too, would be able to visit those scenes of enchantment beyond the seas. The day was long in arriving; but when come it did, he made full use of his opportunities,

until before very long he had seen a good part of the world. And like his love of reading, his taste for foreign travel has not diminished with the years.

In the summer of 1896, Lloyd George set out, accompanied by his fellow-countryman and Parliamentary colleague—Herbert Lewis—on a two months' visit to the Argentine. For all Welshmen that country possesses a special interest owing to the existence in Patagonia of a flourishing Welsh colony, a real "Little Wales beyond the seas," with Welsh schools, churches, societies, newspapers, *Eisteddfodau*, and ways of living all complete. At Monte Video the travellers lighted upon a certain Welshman, Jones by name, in a responsible position at the head of the telegraph system; and upon his informing the Government about the arrival of the two politicians every sort of facility for seeing the country was placed at their disposal. They were entertained at a public dinner, which was attended by two ex-Presidents, and were made honorary members of all the best clubs. The clubs in particular seem to have aroused Lloyd George's enthusiasm, for he wrote: "One of them is a perfect palace of luxury—you can see nothing like it in London. Fencing-rooms, boxing-rooms, swimming-baths—everything you can think of in the way of recreation is provided." Of Buenos Ayres he thought rather poorly, commenting upon its narrow streets, and its lack of individuality. But he was entranced by the beauty of the Cordova Mountains where the scenery, the flowers, the birds, and the friendly inhabitants all filled him with delight. Much to the disappointment of the two travellers, time would not allow of a visit to the Welsh colony, and the kind offer on the part of the Government of a gunboat to convey them thither had to be declined. But they had an interview with the Governor of the colony—Señor Tello—and learned from him many things about the ways of the "Galleusis",

as the Welsh are called in Argentina. Of this interview Lloyd George wrote an account to a newspaper after his return home, and a few lines from it may be quoted: "He (the Governor) said that the settlers eat too much '*Bara menyn a the*' (bread-and-butter and tea), and he was lost in astonishment over the numerous Eisteddfodau held. A singing race was a novelty, a curiosity, to him, and so were their many chapels and strict Sabbatarianism. Lately, he had been having a good deal of trouble over the military drills. Everybody in the Argentine has to be drilled, you know. The Welshmen don't object to that, but they object to its being done on Sunday; and they refused to turn out, and several of them have seen the inside of a gaol in consequence. The poor Governor could not account for such a state of things. 'They are', he said, 'such a quiet, law-abiding people that it is quite inexplicable.' Another burning question is that of the Welsh language. 'If I tell them that they are English,' said the Governor, 'they get in a fury, and say they are not. If I want them to speak Spanish, they say that they are British subjects. They won't have anyone who does not know Welsh in the schools, and they *will* have their own way.' But in spite of this obstinacy on the question of language and Sunday observance, the Governor seems to have had great admiration for the Welshmen—'They are a fine people,' he went on to say, 'they are a brave people, a noble people. Last year I went up country, and was surrounded by six hundred Indians. But the brave Galleusis heard of it, and one hundred and fifty of them mounted their horses and rode up country and rescued me. No, no! They are not troublesome, they are a splendid people. Send me more of them—as many as you like of them. There is plenty of room for them among the hills. A party of them have already gone up the Andes to Cwm Hyvryd, and there is room for more.' " How strange

does the good-humoured tolerance, and the hospitality towards foreigners, breathing through the words of this Argentinian, sound in the ears of a new generation which is being taught by its inspired prophets that intolerance is a political virtue, and that foreigners can be nothing but a source of weakness and corruption !

Three years later, Lloyd George, this time accompanied by another colleague, the accomplished and scholarly patriot Llewelyn Williams, paid his first visit to Canada. In part the visit was an official one for it was undertaken at the instigation of the Canadian Minister of the Interior, who was eager that politicians should see for themselves the advantages offered by his country to immigrants. At Ottawa they were received by Ministers ; and they then undertook a prolonged tour through the land. Thus it came about that Lloyd George's conception of a British Commonwealth expanded through wider and wider circles, as first-hand knowledge revealed to him the possibilities of friendly and mutually profitable co-operation.

Death, in this period, 1895-1899, was playing its part in Lloyd George's private and public world. In the summer of 1896 he lost his mother. The earlier pages of this book will have been written in vain if they have failed to bring out clearly the immense debt which the son owed to Mrs. George. She was always less in the public eye than Richard Lloyd, and she died before the day of her son's great fame had dawned ; but her strong character made the background of the Llanystumdwy and Criccieth homes. Not a day passed without the busy politician in London and the family in Caernarvonshire exchanging letters. The mother had been ailing for some time, though she appeared to be active in body and mind. Her death came as a great shock to Lloyd George—the first of the three heavy blows of that kind which he has received in the course of his life.

In 1897 died George Osborne Morgan, chairman of the Welsh Parliamentary Party, a hard-working, self-sacrificing, and much-beloved man. Then in the following year Thomas Gee passed away. He was the greatest of Welsh journalists ; a patriot whose many years of labour on behalf of the new Wales, of which he had been dreaming all his life, had made possible the public careers of " cottage-bred " men like Tom Ellis and Lloyd George. His paper, the *Baner*, had been the *Manchester Guardian* of Wales ; nor would there be anything unseemly, or derogatory to the fame of the great editor C. P. Scott, if we were to liken Thomas Gee to him.

Both Osborne Morgan and Thomas Gee had for long years borne the heat and the burden of the political day, and their work was done. Far otherwise was it with Tom Ellis, who died in 1899, in his fortieth year. Enough has already been said about the position occupied in Wales by this great and beloved man. In England the platform brilliance of Lloyd George was fast eclipsing him ; but he was still the trusted idol of Wales. It was thought that he was but on the threshold of a great career, and that in the next Liberal Government he could not fail to be given high Cabinet rank. The reaping, after so much devoted sowing in the cause of Wales, would then take place. Alas ! it was not to be ; and a whole nation, and many of the greatest Englishmen of the day, wept genuine tears of grief and disappointment when the earth closed over his grave. He was buried at his home near Bala, under the shadow of the mighty Arenig ; and thousands flocked from every quarter of Wales to pay their tribute to his memory. Lloyd George came with the rest ; and in a short speech in the chapel of which Ellis had been all his life a member, he spoke about the common loss. The great congregation had just been singing a Welsh hymn which says : " The voice of no oppressor shall again break in upon his quiet sleep." " But," cried Lloyd George, in

words which thrilled the audience, "but, if any oppressor should ever arise in future and threaten harm to Wales, I know that the mighty spirit of Tom Ellis will spring from the grave and bid him depart." A Welsh national movement was at once set on foot to erect a suitable memorial. In due course, a fine statue, the work of Goscombe John, was placed in the High Street at Bala, and John Morley went there to unveil it. And thirteen years later a plaque was placed upon the chapel wall, immediately above the pew which Tom Ellis used to occupy with such unfailing regularity when at home. It was unveiled by Lloyd George, then Chancellor of the Exchequer; and the immense audience which assembled in the open air on a fine September day to listen to his speech proved that Wales had not forgotten the best beloved of all her political children.

The death of Tom Ellis made Lloyd George the unchallenged monarch of Welsh politics. There were several talented Welshmen in Parliament—S. T. Evans, Llewelyn Williams, Ellis Griffith, William Jones, Herbert Roberts, Herbert Lewis, D. A. Thomas, and others—but not one of them could, when judged by any conceivable standard, be for a moment compared with him. And in any case their reputation was confined to Wales; while Lloyd George was, by 1898, known to every person interested in politics throughout England as well. In the early part of 1899 he appeared to have the ball at his feet. As a Parliamentary debater he was in the foremost rank; while as a platform speaker there were very few in the country who could be placed in the same category as him. The leading members of his Party—the "Shadow Cabinet", as we should now designate them—shared with him their confidences, and consulted him on questions of policy and Parliamentary tactics. And had not Sir William Harcourt as good as promised him a post in the next Liberal Administration?



In those days, the "pendulum" always did swing; and it could consequently be only a matter of a few years at most before a Liberal Cabinet would come into being. It seemed that all Lloyd George needed for the coveted plum to fall ripe into his mouth was to go on as heretofore, doing his share of hard fighting in the House, helping to create enthusiasm in the constituencies, giving more and more evidence of his resource and his political sagacity, and keeping on good terms with the big men of his Party. Apparently he had everything to gain by being at least moderately orthodox, playing for safety, and proving himself to be a sound and respectable Liberal. Such was Lloyd George's position when the South African War broke out.

## CHAPTER SEVEN

### THE BOER WAR [1899-1902]

IN a biography of Lloyd George it is quite unnecessary to enter into any lengthy discussion of either the causes or the conduct of the Boer War. That has been done now, as fully as it is ever likely to be, in the many excellent histories of the period that have been published, as well as in the Lives of some of the leading actors—Chamberlain, Balfour, Rhodes, Milner, Botha, Smuts, Campbell-Bannerman, and Asquith—which we possess. There cannot be much which we do not now know about the tragic episode ; and that is certainly not likely to shed any new light upon the part played by Lloyd George. To some extent, however, the subject is still a controversial one. On the one hand are those who argue that things in South Africa were under the necessity of getting worse before they could begin to get better ; and that the war, however deplorable in itself, did clear the ground as nothing else could have done of the old tangle of conflicting loyalties, and so render possible the building of the Union. Is it not better, they ask, that there should be one Union of South Africa, strong enough to keep the peace for all time, throughout the vast region south of the Zambesi, than that there should continue to exist there a number of independent and semi-independent little States, each of them intrinsically weak, but strong enough nevertheless to create trouble, and to keep always alive the possibility of war ? Would not South Africa be much worse if,

as did happen in South America, a number of sovereign States had come into being? Surely what happened in North America was more to be desired—the establishment of a powerful federation? Critics of the war policy, however, reply that it is manifestly unfair to take credit for the happy outcome of a really wicked policy. That happy outcome was the reward of the generous Liberal statesmanship which, in 1906, was able to bring good out of evil. The war was a wholly unrighteous one, the consequence of bungling diplomacy, a hectoring and tyrannical Imperialism, and unblushing cupidity and exploitation, in which the major part was played by unsavoury and unscrupulous capitalistic manoeuvres, and the minor part by the muddle-headed Imperialism of men like Chamberlain and Milner. The utterly unscrupulous behaviour of Rhodes, the callous obstinacy of Milner, the scandalous crime of the Jameson Raid, and the sinister way in which a cloak was thrown over the whole series of nefarious activities by the British Government, produced a war without need, and without a particle of justification. Treated patiently, honestly, and sympathetically, the Boers would, in time, have proved more conciliatory. Even if Oom Paul Kruger remained immovable in his obstructionist strategy, there were young men, like Botha, Smuts, and Delarey, who in their heart of hearts disapproved of their old leader's stubbornness. The day of the younger men must soon come; and they (as they afterwards proved in the awful testing-time of the Great War) were true as steel, and in every respect worthy of confidence. Was it worth while, then, to embark upon a horrible war, with its cost in life and treasure, and which did more than anything else in the past hundred years to blacken the good name of England in the eyes of the world at large, when a little patient waiting, a little less greed on the part of capitalists, would have obviated it all?

British Liberals, with the exception of a small group of out-and-out Imperialists, were altogether unhappy about the war. Any war is bound to be a trying time for Liberalism, for the two things cannot thrive for long in each other's company. War necessitates the curtailment of liberty, just as it necessitates, sooner or later, a recourse to the "methods of barbarism". For war is essentially barbarous, and cannot be anything else. Every honest man in England knew, in his secret heart, that the Boers had been hardly, perhaps vilely, used by the unscrupulous and hard-faced seekers after gold and diamonds. Again and again they had been forced to leave their old-fashioned homesteads and patriarchal modes of life, and to go trekking into the wilderness in order to get out of the way of civilisation in the form of the Stock Exchange. And even those Englishmen who believed that the Uitlanders had good cause to complain of their treatment at the hands of President Kruger, and that England could not afford to allow her authority to be thus impugned, still found it very difficult to wax enthusiastic over a war in which financial interests were predominant, and in which it was impossible to discern a trace of chivalry. Kruger was, perhaps, an unamiable personality; but when the alternative to him appeared in the form of Chamberlain and his Stock Exchange allies, there were vast numbers of patriotic Britishers who were frankly puzzled to decide which way the balance inclined. There can be no doubt that practically all the British political leaders of both parties shrank from the prospect of war with the little Boer States. Chamberlain was undoubtedly averse to it. But just as he had weakly allowed his actions after the Jameson Raid to be paralysed by Cecil Rhodes, so in the last few months before the outbreak of hostilities he even more weakly allowed his own better judgment to be overruled by Milner. And the fact that Milner wanted war is proved beyond any possibility

of doubt. Even at the last moment, when peace was trembling in the balance, it is probable that the British Government did not really desire war, nor even believe that it would come. But with criminal irresponsibility they staked everything on the hypothesis that the Boers would give way before an exhibition of force: had not Dr. Jameson declared that "Mr. Kruger never looked into the mouth of a cannon". In fact Chamberlain was bluffing, though his emissaries in South Africa were not; and when the Boers called his bluff, there was no possible way of escape consistent with what in those days was regarded as national dignity and honour. On a small stage it was a rehearsal of the tragic drama played at Berlin in the closing days of July, 1914.

It is merely to confuse the issue to divide the country into those who were for the war, and those who were against it. For in fact there were three quite distinct issues, corresponding to the chronological development of events; and it by no means followed that the same people would be found on the same side in all three periods. The first question was: Ought there to have been a war at all? Next came the question: No matter whether the war was rightly entered into or not, now that we are involved, ought it not to be fought with might and main to a victorious issue? The final question was: Even assuming that it was right to go to war, and also to fight it to a triumphant conclusion, ought not peace to be made when, in the course of 1900, Boer resistance had really been broken? Was it not our duty at that point to come to terms by negotiation, rather than to go on fighting, with ever-increasing barbarism of method, until unconditional surrender had been obtained? It is extremely important that these three issues should be clearly understood if justice is to be done to Lloyd George and some of the other Liberals who agreed with him in his opposition to the policy of the Government.

Unfortunately the war caught the Liberals without a recognised and unchallenged leader. Rosebery had resigned in 1895; and Harcourt and Morley followed his example three years later. Of the members of the last Liberal Cabinet only four were now sitting on the front Opposition Bench—Campbell-Bannerman, Sir Henry Fowler, Asquith, and Bryce. Among these, only Asquith and Campbell-Bannerman could be regarded as serious candidates for the leadership. Asquith was still a hard-working barrister; and he could not afford the leisure required for the task. Campbell-Bannerman was indolent, and in poor health; nor was he, in Opposition, a good House of Commons man. There were few prominent Liberals at that time who seriously thought of him as their future Prime Minister. He himself, however, thought otherwise; and spurred on as always by his wife, he decided that the right which he possessed in virtue of seniority should be claimed. That being so, he was duly elected, by an unenthusiastic Party meeting, to the vacant leadership. It took the Liberal Party eight years to realise how fortunate it had been in its choice. For there can be no doubt now that, had Asquith or Rosebery been chosen, the Party would have been helplessly split, and would not have been ready, when the hour struck in 1905, to profit by the determination of the electorate to have done with Balfour and Chamberlain. By the rank and file of the Party, Campbell-Bannerman's election was at once received with real, if quiet, satisfaction. They had had enough of the moodiness of Rosebery, and the rivalries and jealousies of Harcourt and Morley. And there existed then, as there continued to be always afterwards, a deep-seated distrust of the Imperialism of the younger trio—Asquith, Grey, and Haldane.

For the three years, from 1899 to 1902, the whole-time occupation of the new leader was to try and keep within the

same Party three groups which differed greatly among themselves in their attitude towards the war—viz., the Liberal Imperialist Group, which agreed with the Government that the war was just and inevitable; a centre group who held the war to have been inevitable after Kruger's ultimatum, but regarded the diplomacy which led up to it as provocative and rash; and a third group which was whole-heartedly Pro-Boer, and condemned the war out-and-out as unjust. Rosebery, Asquith, Grey, and Haldane belonged to the first group. In the third group were to be found John Morley, Robert Reid (an ex-Solicitor-General, later to be known as Lord Chancellor Loreburn), the brilliant free-lance Labouchere, and Lloyd George. On the eve of war Morley had emerged from the Hawarden archives, where he was busily engaged upon his *Life of Gladstone*, to sound at Manchester what he hoped would be the anti-war cry of all good Liberals. It was the noble speech which one would expect from so noble a mind and heart; and if all Liberals had accepted it as their watchword, the strain of evil Imperialism which from that time on to 1914 worked corruption in the inner counsels of the Party might have been scorched at its birth. "You may carry fire and sword into the midst of peace and industry," cried Morley: "it will be wrong. A war of the strongest government in the world, with untold wealth and inexhaustible resources, against the little republic, will bring you no glory: it will be wrong. You may make thousands of women widows, and thousands of children fatherless: it will be wrong. You may add a new province to your empire: it will still be wrong. You may give buoyancy to the African stock and share market: it will still be wrong." Not in vain, as those words prove, had Morley pondered over the life of Gladstone, with its insistence at all times that the rule of law must apply between states, as between individuals. Here was the authentic voice of true

Liberalism, judging all things, not by their expediency or profit, but by the eternal standards of right and wrong.

Unfortunately, the majority of Liberals tried to make the best of both worlds : they condemned the war, while at the same time accepting it. And by so doing they sacrificed their all-but-impregnable position. If they had firmly taken their stand upon the injustice and the immorality of the Government policy, they could have done battle with a firm grasp of moral issues ; and probably, by degrees, awakened the uneasy conscience of their fellow-countrymen. But once they had quitted this high ground, and descended to debate the expediency or in expediency of the war, and its prolongation, they were really at Chamberlain's mercy. For when two men agree that a war must be fought, he who believes in fighting it with the greatest possible rigour and ruthlessness is bound to win. It is because of that fact that it has been an axiom in democratic politics that, while a war lasts, any change of Government will be from the less, to the more, unscrupulously bellicose. That truth was abundantly verified at the "Khaki Election" of 1900, when the Liberal Party sustained the overwhelming defeat which, in the circumstances, it so richly deserved ; though it is worthy of note that even at such a time, when the war fever was at its height, the Government only increased its representation in the House of Commons by four. The bulk of the Liberal Party, avoiding the uncompromising Imperialism of the small right wing, and also the Pro-Boer attitude of the somewhat larger left wing, took up a central position, condemning the outbreak of the war, and promising to call to a rigorous account when it was over those whose policy had brought it about ; but maintaining that since hostilities were actually in progress, patriotism demanded that the Government should be afforded every assistance in the vigorous and successful prosecution of the campaign. Chamberlain, at the



General Election of 1900, chose to ignore these distinctions and to dub every Liberal a Pro-Boer; but in truth that was only an unscrupulous electioneering dodge. In fact the Government had slender cause of complaint against the conduct of the Opposition as a whole; and there was certainly not a shred of justification for alleging that more than a handful of Liberals hoped that the Boers would win.

Lloyd George was in Canada when the news that hostilities were impending reached his ears. He deemed it advisable to cut his holiday short, and to make all haste back to England. It is wrong to suppose that he immediately plunged headlong into Pro-Boer activities; on the contrary, he took time to study the whole situation carefully. Here is what he wrote to his brother five days after the outbreak of war: "Not seen anyone as to the Transvaal. A letter awaiting me from the editor of the *Speaker*. He has been staying with Morley at Hawarden, and at his request wrote me for my opinion what should be done on opening of Parliament. Shall not reply until I have time to reflect deeply over new situation created by Boer advance. At present am rather inclined to agree with *Chronicle* than with Labby over that. Boers have invaded our territories, and until they are driven back, Government entitled to money to equip forces to defend our possessions. In my opinion the way these poor hunted burghers have been driven in self-defence to forestall us aggravates our crime—there is something diabolical in its malignity."

It is well to have clearly in mind what were the guiding principles which governed Lloyd George's attitude towards the war. He was not then—neither has he ever been—a Pacifist. Like practically all his countrymen of that date, he believed that war can be, on occasion, a legitimate instrument of national policy. At the same time, he was a strong

humanitarian, tremendously sensitive to all human suffering ; and that being so, his opinion was that war could only be justified in very extreme cases, and certainly never for purposes of national aggrandisement, or for the promotion of material prosperity. The physical brutality of war has always repelled him. Where others see the glory, the heroism, the pomp and circumstance, he sees chiefly the blood, the mud, and the tears. It was outrageous in his sight that hundreds of thousands of British and Boer men should be maimed and killed in order to settle a trumpery quarrel between an obstinate old man leading a backward agricultural community, and an intellectual Oxonian leading a pack of avaricious fortune-hunters. Even more unspeakably scandalous was it that twenty thousand women and children should have to die in concentration camps in this same unworthy quarrel.

The Boer War also appealed to Lloyd George's belief in nationalism. For him there was something divine about a nation ; and if the nation further happened to be a small one, the divinity with which it was hedged around was perhaps all the more conspicuous. And when he looked at the Transvaal and at the Orange Free State, just as when he looked fifteen years later at ravaged Belgium, he felt that there, but for the grace of God, went his own beloved Wales ! Like so many of his contemporaries interested in the serious study of politics, he had been a diligent reader of Mazzini and Thomas Davis. The great Italian prophet had taught him that a nation is God's own chosen instrument for working out the political salvation of the world ; and consequently, that to destroy it is one of the most heinous of sins. Nor does the size of the nation in any way affect the question : to kill a small nation is as great a sin, while it is also far less chivalrous, as to kill a large one. Mussolini was also an admiring student of Mazzini ; but he was an admiring

disciple of Machiavelli as well. And it so happens that, while the pure teaching of Mazzini is life-giving food for the peoples, when it is blended with that of Machiavelli it becomes the rankest of poisons. In plain language, a nationalism which bows to the moral law is a blessing; but if it claims to be a law unto itself it becomes a pernicious scourge. On the whole it may be said that the nationalism of the nineteenth century was a fine and beneficial thing, since it was, in the majority of cases, the protest of small and weak peoples against the tyranny of great States, and an appeal to be allowed to live their own life. The nationalism of the post-War world is so terrible a curse, because its loudest champions are powerful States seeking for a plausible excuse to exterminate their own minorities, or to subjugate their weaker neighbours. Lloyd George's belief in the nineteenth century form of nationalism made him a relentless critic of England's behaviour towards the Boers: his hatred of the later form of nationalism made him the doughty antagonist of Germany in the Great War.

In no part of the speeches which Lloyd George delivered in the course of the Boer War do we sense a greater sincerity than in those passages in which he extols the virtues of small states; and nothing moved him more profoundly than the spectacle of one of them defying a great power. "If you look at the pages of history," he declared in one of these speeches, "you will find that little nations have ever been the chosen vessels of the Tabernacle to convey the best wines of Providence to the lips of mankind." And speaking on the same theme in the House of Commons, he coupled admiration of the Boers with love of Wales in a thrilling passage: "Two thousand years ago the great Empire of Rome came with its battalions and conquered that part of Caernarvonshire in which my constituency is situated. They built walls and fortifications as the tokens of their conquest,

and they proscribed the use of the Cymric tongue. The other day I was glancing at the ruins of those walls. Underneath I noted the children at play, and I could hear them speaking, with undiminished force and vigour, the proscribed language of the conquered nation. Close by there was a school, where the language of the Roman conquerors was being taught, but taught as a *dead* language."

The third of Lloyd George's reasons for opposing the war was his belief that it would retard indefinitely the march of social progress. It was being fought, he argued, to promote the financial interests of a small class, a number of wealthy capitalists, in league, he often hinted, with Ministers of the Crown whose relatives, if not they themselves, were lining their pockets on a grand scale by Government contracts. It was his colleague Ellis Griffith, and not Lloyd George, who made in the House of Commons the witty pun: "The more the British Empire expands, the more does the Chamberlain family contract"—but it expresses the heart of the indictment which Lloyd George himself did make, week in, week out, so long as the war lasted, in the House of Commons, as well as on scores of public platforms up and down the country. From the start he foresaw more clearly than did Ministers or soldiers that the war would be a long one, and that it would cost an enormous sum of money, as well as take a heavy toll of human life. To pay the bill, he knew quite well, would mean the shelving of such beneficent measures as old age pensions. Only a few months previously the Prime Minister had appointed a Select Committee to report on that very question. Lloyd George had been a member of the committee, and had thrown himself with the utmost enthusiasm into the work. Chamberlain was the moving spirit; and his sincerity as a social reformer made a deep impression upon the Welsh politician. The committee reported in favour of old age pensions; and but for

the outbreak of war there can be no doubt that a Bill giving effect to its recommendations would have been produced there and then ; for Chamberlain was omnipotent in his own Party, and the vast majority of Liberals were strongly in favour of the policy. Unfortunately, the war did come ; and pensions were postponed for ten years. " If we go to war with the Transvaal," wrote Lloyd George sorrowfully to his brother, " there will be no pensions. They are fools to quarrel with the Boers. It will ultimately be unpopular, and it is not only essentially an unjust quarrel, but, what is more from the point of view of the man in the street, an unprofitable one. There is neither gain nor glory in it at all adequate to the sacrifices." In one of his speeches a few weeks later he emphasised this point afresh : " There is not a lyddite shell which burst on the African hills that did not carry away an old age pension. What is the satisfaction? Oh, it killed two hundred Boers—fathers of families, sons of mothers, who wept for them. Are you satisfied to give up old age pensions for that? " And again : " Is there any period in the history of England or any other country when reforms were carried out in the time of war? The history of every country proves the contrary. In the time of the Revolution in France a cry was raised in favour of going to war with Prussia, England, Austria and Italy. ' No,' said Robespierre, ' the moment you go to war there will be an end to all reforms.' France refused to listen, and went to war ; with the result that the reforms desired from the Revolution were to a great extent lost. And here we are, the greatest civilising power in the world, engaged in the greatest military struggle that we have ever entered upon ! One would surely expect some magnificent service to humanity from the greatest effort ever made by the greatest civilising power. What is that service? I have searched for it in vain. . . . Every time a lyddite shot is fired it

costs what would pension two men for a whole year. One battle blazed away fifty thousand pounds in shot and shell. The money that would have built comfortable homes for hundreds of thousands of our fellow-men has gone to dig graves in South Africa."

In no sense was Lloyd George then, or at any other time, what was then commonly known as a "Little Englander". There had been a small, though influential, Radical section who were violently opposed to the expansion of England overseas, and who would, with a sigh of relief, have given away all our possessions. This was the doctrine taught with a remarkable combination of learning and eloquence by that fine writer Frederic Harrison. It had also, in all essentials, been the political creed of John Morley in his earlier years. Time may even yet show that these men, on a long view, were right. But Lloyd George, as we have already seen, was an Imperialist in the sense that he believed in the possibility of federating our far-flung Empire on the basis of self-government for all its component parts. And holding that belief, he would have been in favour at all times of fighting for the retention of admittedly British territory against a threat from any other Power. His main objection to the Boer War was that it is impossible to win the love of a people by hitting them; and that the genuine friendship of the Boers was an essential factor in the making of the Dominion of South Africa which was already floating in his imagination. The Welsh Tory newspaper—the *Western Mail*—at least had the honesty, even in those days of bitter quarrel, to admit that it was so. "It is generally assumed," it wrote, "that Mr. Lloyd George is not only a Pro-Boer but a pronounced Little Englander. This is far from being the case. As a matter of fact, Mr. Lloyd George is of the school of Lord Rosebery on all other topics except the South African one. Even on this subject he is at one with the

objects of the Government, believing that the peace and prosperity of South Africa depend upon British rule being supreme in that part of the world. This object he believes would have been attained by pacific methods. The fact that the Government are attaining it by more forcible methods has impelled him for the time being to go into the camp of the enemy." That is accurately and truly put; and it is well to remember that, although Lloyd George shared to the full in the social reforms and pacific aspirations of the left wing of the Liberal Party, he also went the whole way with the most ardent Imperialists in a belief in the possibilities of the British Commonwealth as the greatest instrument of civilisation extant in the world. It was just because he held this belief so fervently that he was both shocked and exasperated when he saw his cherished idol dragged through the mire by Chamberlain and Milner, by being reduced to the level of an undignified fight between a great State and a tiny one, and that for the sordid object of enriching a few unscrupulous and selfish capitalists.

Believing as he did that the war was unnecessary, that it was unjust, that it was the action of a bully, that it would destroy for many years all chance of social reform, and likewise that it would probably engender so much lasting ill feeling in South Africa as to render a union of all its political communities impossible, is it to be marvelled at that he speedily came to the conclusion that it was his duty to denounce and oppose it with all his power? That such a course would make him intensely unpopular was apparent from the first; for it does not take long for the heady wine of war to get to a people's head, especially with so adroit a barman as Joseph Chamberlain to pass the cup. Lloyd George may have had some hope at first that his own people in Wales would see the matter as he saw it, and that their hearts would be touched by the heroic sufferings of a little

nation not unlike their own. If any such expectation ever was cherished by him, disillusionment came fast on its heels ; for ominous reports began to reach him to the effect that even the stalwart Liberals of the Caernarvon Boroughs were determined to back the Government. That he was profoundly disappointed by their attitude goes without saying ; but never for a single moment did he consider the possibility even of trimming his own sails to catch the rising breeze. On the contrary, the presence of danger, and of powerful opposition, only strengthened his resolve to do what appeared to him right.

Lloyd George unfurled the banner of opposition to the war in a speech in Parliament in October, 1899. It took the form of an attack upon what he regarded as Chamberlain's mishandling of the situation ; and it was much approved among Radical politicians. A month later came the far more serious ordeal of a public speech in Wales. Of late his visits to Wales had come to be in the nature of triumphal processions. A crowded hall, an enthusiastic reception, tremendous applause, the adulation accorded to a beloved and trusted leader—these were the things that he had learned to expect. But now he was going to face the bitter experience of meeting friends turned into foes, taking his political life in his hand. Never was his character, his diplomacy, and his oratory put to so severe a test as it was in the series of meetings which he did not shrink from addressing in the course of the next three years. The first speech was made at Carmarthen, to a by no means friendly audience. But he put his view of the war before it, temperately, though firmly ; pointing out that had there been any aggression on the part of the Boers, he would have been in favour of punishing them ; but that as a member of a small nation he could not, without a protest, see them deprived of their freedom at the dictation of profiteers. He would be



"recreant before God and man," he declared, if he failed to brand it as an infamy. "And here I do it to-night," he cried, "even if I leave Carmarthen to-morrow without a friend."

His next attack was delivered at Oxford, in a speech to the Palmerston Club, at the end of January, 1900; and this speech is, perhaps, the finest all-round statement of his attitude which we possess. He began by criticising the characteristic Imperialism which Chamberlain was endeavouring to popularise. "The country," he declared, "is suffering from an overdose of Imperialism, and the greatest service the Liberal Party can render to it is to inculcate the sound, healthy ideas of Fox, Cobden, Bright, and Gladstone." Then repudiating the view that the Empire's life was at stake, he went on: "The new Imperialism seems to be a somewhat hysterical person, alternating between the neurotic excitations of Pashoda and Onidurman on the one hand, and the equally morbid depression of 'Black Week' on the other. The life of the Empire is no more at stake in this war than it was in the conflict with our American colonies. One of Mr. Chamberlain's speeches has done more to jeopardise the Empire than a score of Nicholson's Nek; and this war will do us an infinitude of good if it teaches us to realise the fatuity of such utterances and the policy which they proclaim." Next he commented upon the moral isolation which Britain was suffering in a disapproving world: "We have the whole of the civilised world banded in hostility to us. Lord Rosebery said the other day that Europe was unanimous in opposition to us. He might have made an exception in the case of Turkey, which is sympathetic. As for America, four-fifths of the American Press is opposed to us, and opinion there is growing very rapidly in favour of the Boers. They made an honest effort at the first to find some excuse for us, but the facts were

too strong for them. How do you account for the unanimity of this hostility? It is due unquestionably to the aggressiveness, the arrogance, and the rapacity which characterise the demeanour of the new Imperialism." Then followed one of the countless hits at Chamberlain with which all his speeches of that period are sprinkled: "The new Imperialists will have to frame a revised version of their Scriptures—a Birmingham edition—containing the words: 'In the beginning Joseph Chamberlain created heaven and earth.' " Then followed a scathing reference to one of his favourite themes—the corruption of the Tory Government: "It may be said, in the words of Lord Rosebery, that the Boer Government was a 'corrupt oligarchy', although such a statement comes with bad grace from a peer who sits in an assembly adorned by the presence of Hooley's directors, and whose members voted to themselves out of the public funds millions of money under the pretence of relieving agricultural distress. But, at any rate, it can be said of the Boer farmer who lined the trenches, that the hand which grasped the Mauser was never soiled with a bribe. He fought for the freedom and independence of his native land, and there is no more sacred cause for which a man can die."

As the verbal contest at home grew more bitter, it was frequently alleged by his opponents that Lloyd George had insulted and belittled the British soldier. Such a charge was explicitly brought against him at the General Election of 1900. It was, however, without a shadow of foundation; and again and again Lloyd George challenged those who repeated it to quote chapter and verse for the charge. In the Caernarvon Boroughs, when the untrue slander was employed against him by his opponent—Colonel Platt—he issued an explicit denial; stating further, that if none of his supporters would do it for him, he himself would attend one of Platt's meetings and give him the lie direct.

Another charge which Lloyd George strongly resented was that of unpatriotic behaviour. It seemed to be taken for granted by Government supporters that once a war had been embarked upon, no matter how iniquitous its origins, patriotism demanded that every loyal British subject should give it his support. On no account could Lloyd George, believer as he was in free speech and criticism as the very life-blood of democracy, accept such a doctrine. For if it were to be accepted, it would then only be necessary for a Government to commit the country to a war, however unjust, and however much disapproved of in their hearts by the people, to entitle itself to full support. "My country right or wrong" was certainly not a slogan that ought to be found on the lips of a Liberal brought up in the great traditions of Gladstone and John Bright. And most emphatically did Lloyd George repel the suggestion that such a rule ought to govern a politician's attitude towards so serious a thing as war. "Is every politician who opposes a war during its progress of necessity a traitor?" he demanded. "If so, then Chatham was a traitor, and Burke and Fox especially; and in later times Cobden and Bright, and even Mr. Chamberlain—all these were traitors."

A few days after the Oxford speech Lloyd George spoke in the House of Commons in support of an amendment to the address, moved by Lord Edmund Fitzmaurice. The amendment condemned the Government for "the want of knowledge, foresight, and judgment" displayed in its conduct of South African affairs, and in its preparation for war. Lloyd George's contribution to the debate took the form of a scathing indictment of what he termed a conspiracy on the part of a body of financiers to subvert the independence of a small State, under the pretext of "equal rights for all". "I should have thought," he scornfully cried, "that the greatest pride of the Uitlanders would have

been to take part in this conflict and fight for their supposed rights. But how many have availed themselves of the privilege? They prefer to lounge about the hotels of Cape Town, while English homes are being made desolate on their behalf. I am sure that I shall carry the House with me when I declare that such men and their grievances are not worth one drop of British blood." He did not carry the House with him; for the majority of its members were too subservient to the all-powerful Colonial Secretary to venture upon any course of criticism however mild; they remembered that Chamberlain was the sworn friend of the Uitlanders! Nevertheless, the speech did profoundly move the House; and it elicited some glowing tributes from men of note. Harcourt then and there scribbled his congratulations on an envelope, which he passed to Lloyd George: "Magnificent!" he wrote. "You have delivered a speech which would have been worthy of Grattan at his best." And even Balfour is said to have remarked to a friend that it was the best debating speech to which he had ever listened.

Far the most trying ordeal for Lloyd George, however, was the facing of his own constituents, the majority of whom were by no means pleased with the part that their Member was playing. Not that Wales shared in the enthusiasm for the New Imperialism then so popular in England. On the whole it would be correct to say that all the more solid and thoughtful elements in the Principality felt a rooted mistrust of the territorial expansion, and of the machinations of capitalists and financiers in league with the heavy industries of the Midlands. In every Welsh town and village there were conspicuous Pro-Boers to be met. But the greater number of people, at least down to the election of 1900, took the view that Kruger had been deliberately provocative, and that it would be no bad thing to teach him a lesson in international good manners.

Lloyd George's first encounter with his constituents was at Bangor. Leading Liberals did their best to dissuade him from coming; but he would not hear of such weak-kneed behaviour. "I am going to Bangor," he wrote to his brother; "I mean to insist upon it. I hear the bulk of the leading Liberals are strongly opposed to a meeting at this juncture, and they entreat me not to go. I will not listen to them." So greatly did they fear a tumult that the trustees of the hall in which the meeting was to be held insisted upon its being heavily insured. When the day arrived, a huge audience filled the building, and a still larger one surged outside. Lloyd George refused the suggestion that he should enter by a back door: instead, he drove up to the main entrance, bowing and smiling to the howling crowd on either hand. When he rose to speak there was uproar for some minutes; but he persevered; and by degrees his eloquence and passionate sincerity won their way, and at the close a resolution condemning the war was carried by a large majority. It was a great personal triumph. But outside the hall a mob which had been out of hearing of the speaker's siren voice was still lashing itself into frenzy by shouting and singing patriotic ditties. Again Lloyd George refused to steal away furtively, or even to drive in a carriage. Instead, he insisted upon walking through the crowded streets. One zealous patriot struck him on the head with a heavy bludgeon. Fortunately for the victim it was the custom in those days for M.P.s to wear top-hats, otherwise the blow might have been fatal. As it was he was stunned, and had to be carried into a neighbouring shop. From there, when he had sufficiently recovered, he escaped by a back entrance.

At Caernarvon, a few days later, he fared better; for Caernarvon was a more democratic city than Bangor, which, owing to its being a cathedral city, had always a tender spot in its heart for Toryism; but even there many of his

old supporters informed him that they could not vote for him again.

Then came the General Election, well-timed by the Government to catch the full flow of the patriotic tide which had risen high in 1900. Never had the prospects of the Liberal Party seemed so poor—hopelessly divided in its attitude towards the war; uncertain of its own leaders, who were devoting most of their energy to circumventing one another; and with a conscience thoroughly troubled over the South African adventure. To the Conservatives of the Caernarvon Boroughs it seemed truly a heaven-sent opportunity for getting rid of the detested Lloyd George; and with so great a falling away in Liberal support for him, it did not appear unlikely that their desires would be gratified. The Conservative candidate, fittingly enough on such an occasion, was a retired officer—Colonel Platt—who was a good figurehead, even if he lacked all real knowledge of politics. Lloyd George's meetings were very different from those of former days; for now he had to pull hard against the stream of popular opinion. But the very difficulty of his task only served to bring out the best in him. "Lloyd George," declared one of his colleagues at a later date, "is never happy unless he is up against a brick wall." And it is true that in spite of all the disappointments and annoyances of this campaign he preserved his high spirits and his good humour unbroken. Every one of the boroughs was visited by him several times; for he was determined that the constituency should go to the poll at least knowing his reasons for opposing the war, whatever might be their opinion of the validity of those reasons. Almost forty years have elapsed since the "Khaki Election"; but elderly men and women in Caernarvonshire still relate with admiring wonder portions of the great speeches which their Member then delivered. For the truth is, that with so great a cause to fight

for, and with so manifest a sincerity on his part, he succeeded in stirring their minds and hearts as he had never done before, and as he probably never quite did again. The memory lingers in the little fishing town of Nevin of one of those wonderful speeches delivered then. At the outset the audience was hard and sullen, obviously requiring tactful handling if an open clash was to be averted. Leaving the war on one side, Lloyd George began his speech with a review of Tory delinquencies. By degrees the meeting began to warm with the speaker to the old themes; for the people were still Liberals through and through. Then came a reference to the alliance between Chamberlain and firms which were making profit out of the war. And finally, a word from the heart about the war itself: "Five years ago," he cried, in those melting accents which never failed to bring tears to the eyes of a Welsh audience, "the electors of Caernarvon Boroughs handed me a slip of blue paper, the certificate of my election, to hand to the Speaker as their accredited representative. If I never again represent the Caernarvon Boroughs in the House of Commons, I shall at least have the satisfaction of handing back to them that blue paper with no stain of human blood upon it." With that the barriers between speaker and audience fell, and in one mass they rose to their feet to cheer.

One by one the boroughs were recaptured by the magic of this man's eloquence, courage, and personality. Even Bangor, ere the election campaign was over, was again making a hero of him. The truth is, that by 1900 what war fever there ever had been in Wales had considerably subsided, and many Liberals were feeling heartily ashamed of having even momentarily succumbed to it. The conduct of the war, especially in the days of the concentration camps and the burning of farmsteads, pierced the conscience of this Welsh peasant community, and won their sympathy for the Boers.

Polling day arrived; and Lloyd George was returned by the largest majority he had hitherto obtained—296. Never were courage and sincerity more signally and dramatically vindicated.

Scenes of indescribable enthusiasm were enacted at the declaration of the poll. It has, fortunately, been described for us in the graphic words of an eyewitness—Harold Spender, who sent the account to the *Manchester Guardian*. "It was close upon midnight when the suspense ended," he wrote, "and the mayor stepped out on the balcony of the Town Hall. 'Lloyd George,' he cried, but he could say no more. One mighty shout rose from the multitude beneath. Then came delirium. It began with the usual appearance on the balcony, but it did not reach fever pitch until Mr. Lloyd George, finding that no carriage came through the crowd, essayed to reach the Liberal Club under the escort of six constables. He might just as well have relied on a set of corks to face the rapids of Niagara. The love of those people was almost terrible; it was certainly dangerous. They closed upon their hero, they wrung his hand until it almost came off, they patted his back until it almost broke, they drowned his protests in their shouts. Manfully the constables fought their way forward, but from above Mr. George's white hat looked like a little paper boat in a raging sea. Then Mr. Lloyd George spoke a few of those brief, pregnant sentences which he well knows how to coin. 'While England and Scotland are drunk with blood, the brain of Wales remains clear, and she advances with a steady step on the road of progress and liberty.' Then occurred the wildest scene of all. Descending from the balcony, we mounted into a brake, where Mr. Lloyd George could be seen of all, and yet saved from their too perilous attentions. This brake was filled with the untiring lieutenants who had brought Mr. Lloyd George safely



through the fight. They advanced slowly down the main street, the crowd with one consent formed up behind in marching column, and as they marched they sang. Ah! how those Welshmen sang the old election song of Caernarvon Boroughs!

“ Hurrah! hurrah! We're ready for the fray!  
Hurrah! hurrah! We'll drive Sir John away!  
The grand young man will triumph; Lloyd George  
will win the day;  
Fight for the freedom of Cambria.”

“ They sang it to ‘ Marching Through Georgia ’, the song to which a Continent has fought two wars, and will fight yet another. It is one of the best marching songs in the world, and looking back on that great multitude you saw its tread become perfectly rhythmic; its confusion become order; delirium pass under the magic of a song; the mob become an army. And so they marched through the whole town, while every window and doorstep was filled with waving hats and handkerchiefs. It was like the welcome of a king returning from his wars. The darkness seemed to matter nothing, all seemed lightness to-night. The enemy, so strong at midday, had disappeared. Seized by a sudden inspiration, Mr. Lloyd George stood upright in the carriage, and with lifted hat met the multitude face to face with a happy smile. A few months ago they had stoned him; a few weeks ago they were still against him; but now with silver tongue he had won back their hearts, and his people were with him again. Surely, few men have tasted such an hour. The procession reached the end of its journey. Then Mr. George called for silence and asked them to sing once more ‘ The Land of Our Fathers ’. In a moment there was utter silence, and then they sang that great and

solemn anthem. The darkness above us lent the scene a ghostly majesty ; the earnest, melancholy harmonies breathed an undying hope ; the sea of invisible faces gave a sense of vast indefinable strength. The great hymn ended, and then in perfect quiet the great multitude dispersed. And so was a victory for courage and principle which in this election will hold a historic place second to no other." Lloyd George lived to enjoy two other moments of supreme triumph. The first was on November 11th, 1918, when the people of London, with frenzied acclamation, greeted him as the man who had won the war. The second scene was June, 1919, when, with King George V at his side, the leader of the British Peace Delegation, fresh from the historic scene at Versailles, drove in triumph through the streets of the capital. To him at the time it might very well have seemed that here was a trio of ever-ascending triumphs ; but we who stand further removed from the scene can now perceive that the victory on the smaller stage of the Caernarvon Boroughs was incomparably the more noble ; for in connection with it time has brought no regrets, while the Great War and the Treaty of Versailles find us now wondering whether they were not the greatest calamities that have ever befallen mankind.

Liberalism had triumphed in the Caernarvon Boroughs ; but in the country as a whole the Conservative Government had been returned by an immense majority, and Chamberlain was still cock-of-the-walk. Lloyd George felt himself greatly strengthened for further contest by two factors—first, the renewed confidence of his own constituents which had been extended to him in so remarkable a manner ; and secondly, the fact that Boer resistance in the field was now practically broken, and yet the Government did not try to make peace. Salisbury, when the war was started, had plainly declared that there were to be no annexations ; that

England was fighting only for her well-known rights ; and that she did not want diamonds or gold. Now, however, the Government was playing a different tune : it was talking about unconditional surrender, and about annexation. This change of policy alienated the sympathy of the Liberals who had supported, in 1899, what they considered to be a war undertaken in defence of our legitimate claims and rights, but who had no liking for a pure war of conquest. The demand began to be raised, then, for peace by conciliation. Chamberlain, however was adamant. The longer the war continued, the more pugnacious did he become. He was making no secret of his determination to wipe the Boer States off the map. Meanwhile, contractors and profiteers in England, and especially in Birmingham, were thriving, and using all their influence against a speedy peace.

The war had now reached its most unpleasant stage : as a regular army the Boer forces had collapsed ; but up and down the vast theatre of hostilities bands of insurgents were still roaming about ; and it was in order to suppress these that the technique of concentration camps, and the destruction of farmhouses, was adopted. At home this policy was warmly defended by Government supporters on grounds of inevitability ; and on the opposite side of the House Liberal Imperialists took the same view. But on this issue, the centre section of the Liberal Party were at one with Lloyd George and the left wing in condemning the procedure with the greatest vehemence ; and the breach in the party was thereby made much worse than it had been before. Campbell-Bannerman's view was that this farm burning and the slaughter of thousands of women and children, was not only a crime, but also a blunder of the worst possible kind. For he was already looking into the future, to the time when the two peoples—Boers and British—would have to make of South Africa a common home.

To him, then, it seemed nothing better than incredible folly to perpetrate deeds which could only have the effect of creating such bitterness as it would take generations to allay. Nations have long memories; and in particular they are prone to brood over cruel treatment. Highlanders are still, after two hundred years, sore over the treachery of Glencoe. Cromwell's cruelties in Ireland, after two centuries and a half, are still powerful factors keeping the Irish and the English apart. Would it not be the same in South Africa? And with that fear filling his mind, Campbell-Bannerman gave utterance to the phrase "methods of barbarism", which gave such deep offence in so many quarters. John Morley hastened to support Campbell-Bannerman's view; and there can be no doubt that the Liberal rank and file agreed with it in their heart of hearts.

Needless to say, Lloyd George was delighted with his leader's pungent pronouncement; and on June 17th he moved the adjournment of the House for the purpose of calling attention to the conditions prevailing in the concentration camps. Campbell-Bannerman supported him; but Haldane spoke strongly on the side of the Government. Two days later, a great anti-war demonstration was held in the Queen's Hall, at which a resolution condemnatory of the Government was moved by Lloyd George. "I thank Heaven," he cried, "for the spectacle of one little nation of peasants standing against the mightiest Empire in the world, preparing to die rather than prostrate itself with the other nations of the earth at the feet of the vulgar priesthood of Mammon." To this speech the Liberal Imperialists took still greater umbrage; and Asquith, a few days afterwards, gave public utterance to the belief (incredible though it seems, coming from a so-called Liberal) that "this country is engaged in no criminal adventure, but in a campaign not of her own seeking".

It was inevitable, in these circumstances, that in the House of Commons, and to a lesser extent in the country at large, the political contest should more and more tend to take the form of a duel between Chamberlain and Lloyd George. Before long it had come to be taken almost for granted in the House that when the one sat down the other would at once rise to his feet. It was a mighty contest, and a by no means unequal one. The older politician was generally regarded as the most effective debater in Parliament. His ferocity and ruthlessness when attacked were such that few save the most seasoned debaters ever dared to cross swords with him. Before his biting satire, his contemptuous invective, and his venomously personal onslaughts, everybody seemed to quail. But Lloyd George did not quail. Night after night he stood, calm and collected, pouring out his corrosive invective, his satire charged with a wit which Chamberlain could not rival, and hitting back with a fierceness fully equal to the Colonial Secretary's own. It was not long before friend and foe alike freely acknowledged that at last Chamberlain had met his match. On Lloyd George's side, dislike of what he regarded as Chamberlain's pernicious policy, and his corrupting influence in British public life, did not prevent him from giving unstinted admiration to the brilliant gifts which he displayed; nor did he ever forget the immense service which he had rendered to the cause of Democracy in his Radical days. Nor was it in Lloyd George's nature to hate a political opponent in any personal sense. With Chamberlain, however, it was otherwise. Generosity formed no element in that strange man's character: he was vindictive and small-minded. He carried on a war of extermination against his political adversaries, just as he had carried on a war of extermination against his commercial rivals in the Midlands. It was a wholly evil example which he set; and Birmingham

has never ceased to suffer from it in its municipal life. For the tradition was set, that if you were not on the side of the Chamberlains, you might play no part in the city's public life, obtain no honour, or, no matter what your merits, be regarded as a person of consequence. Unfortunately far too many people then and later were willing to concede this dictatorial position to Chamberlain; but the Member for the Caernarvon Boroughs was not of their number.

Both in the House of Commons, and on platforms up and down the country, the contest between these two not unequal swordsmen raged fiercely through the two years 1900 and 1901. "England's tawdriest statesman" was one of the epithets which Lloyd George flung at Chamberlain in a speech delivered at Cardiff; and going on, he said: "The land of the despised Celt, forsooth, where freedom dwells in every heart, and whose sons have shed their blood to cement the fabric of this Empire, is treated as though it had no right to talk about the Empire in the face of Birmingham. Why, some people talk as if the British Empire was to be found in the backyard of Birmingham. In the present disastrous war, it has been for the Celts to die, and for Birmingham to deal, to take the profit and to supply the muskets by which our own soldiers have been shot down. If there is one thing which the Liberals specially need in these times, it is some leader on the Front Opposition Bench who will unmask the pretensions of this electroplated Rome, its peddling Imperialism, and its tin Caesar."

In the House Lloyd George took Chamberlain to task for his mean conduct in throwing out hints of the alleged treasonable contents of letters written before the war by British Members of Parliament to various Boer leaders, without providing explicit evidence. Rumour, needless to say, had exaggerated the offence, and many M.P.s were surrounded by a vague cloud of suspicion. "Was this the

course of a gentleman?" demanded Lloyd George, turning fiercely on Chamberlain. "I venture to say that no other Member on that side of the House would have done such a thing."

Many and acrimonious were the debates in Parliament over the plainly-uttered charges of the Opposition that members of the Government, and particularly the relations of Chamberlain himself, were taking advantage of their political positions to further their own commercial interests. The Colonial Secretary's brother was head of the firm of Kynochs, which was making immense profits out of the sale of armaments. In that firm, Lloyd George declared, the Chamberlain family held shares to the value of a quarter of a million pounds. He further referred to the firm of Haskin and Sons, who were Admiralty contractors, practically a private company owned by the Chamberlain family. The same enterprising family also had a considerable number of shares in Tubes Limited, and in Elliott's Metal Co. "These interests," asserted Lloyd George, "have been acquired since 1893—that is to say, since there has come into power the Administration of which the right honourable gentleman is the most potent factor." And referring in particular to Kynochs Ltd. he went on to say: "The official investigation in regard to this firm has disclosed the most disgraceful system of favouritism towards one company which has been manifested by any Government department. I do not say that either the Secretary for the Colonies, or the Financial Secretary to the Treasury (Austen Chamberlain) has done anything to lower the standard of proud pre-eminence which we enjoy as a country in this matter. What I say is, that they have given legitimate ground for uneasiness, and above all, they have established precedents which, if they are followed, would lead to something infinitely worse than anything I have spoken of to-day."

Nothing gave Chamberlain more acute offence than these suggestions of corruption. They touched him in the quick, and roused his most fierce resentment. "It is very hard," he pleaded on one occasion, "that after twenty-five years of Parliamentary service I should be required to explain to my Parliamentary colleagues that I am not a thief and a scoundrel." Of corrupt dealings in the strict sense there was no evidence; but quite enough remained after those debates to show how undesirable it is to have in office a man whose brothers and cousins and intimate friends own great interests which can, and indeed must be, affected by Government policy.

As the months went by, and there was still no talk of peace, Lloyd George's ire was again kindled against the Government, and in particular against the impenitent Colonial Secretary. He believed that on at least three occasions an honourable peace could have been made, viz. after the capture of Bloemfontein, after the capture of Pretoria, and on the occasion of the negotiations between Lord Kitchener and General Botha. The failure to take advantage of those opportunities he attributed to Chamberlain's malign influence. "It is," he declared, "because we have a mere electioneer, and not a statesman, at the head of affairs—a man who has his eye not on Africa, but on the British polling booths."

This unsleeping hunting of Chamberlain, and the contemptuous and scathing things said about him, could not fail to render Lloyd George detestable in the eyes of the majority of the inhabitants of Birmingham, most of whom were even then fully committed to that idolatry of their favourite statesman, which has ever since made the politics of the famous capital of the Midlands just a trifle ridiculous. The practice, so loyally maintained for twenty years by Austen and Neville Chamberlain, of never making a speech



on any topic without a few words of eulogy of their father, makes outsiders smile and shrug their shoulders impatiently; but in Birmingham it still brings tears to the eyes of the faithful. What is now, no doubt, a pose, was a real devotion in the days of the Boer War. Little wonder, then, that when the news reached Birmingham that Lloyd George was actually coming to denounce Chamberlain in the Town Hall of his own city, the blood of the multitude began to boil, and they vowed that the sacrilegious man should not escape with his life. The meeting had been arranged by the Birmingham Liberal Association as part of their annual routine. But the Unionists chose to regard it as a deliberate affront; and they set to work to bring it to naught. How far the subsequent tragic happening is to be attributed to the unguided lawlessness of a brutal mob, and how far to the deliberate plotting of the local Press and prominent Chamberlainites in the city, it is impossible to decide. That many Unionist stalwarts were in the Town Hall on the fatal night, and also in the mob which smashed windows, burst in doors, killed one man, and seriously wounded scores of others, cannot be denied. Nor can it be denied that the local Unionist Press did its utmost to pour oil on the flames. Only two days before the meeting one of those irresponsible and blackguardly papers wrote in its leading article: "Mr. Lloyd George has studiously acquired the reputation of being the most violent Pro-Boer in the country. This Welshman has used language respecting the Ministers of his country and the soldiers of the King which, if uttered respecting any Continental Ministry, would have caused him to be arraigned for treason and sentenced to a considerable term of imprisonment. A hundred years ago in England he would have stood a very excellent chance of losing his head—a fact which, metaphorically, he performs every time he addresses a public meeting. His particular antipathy has

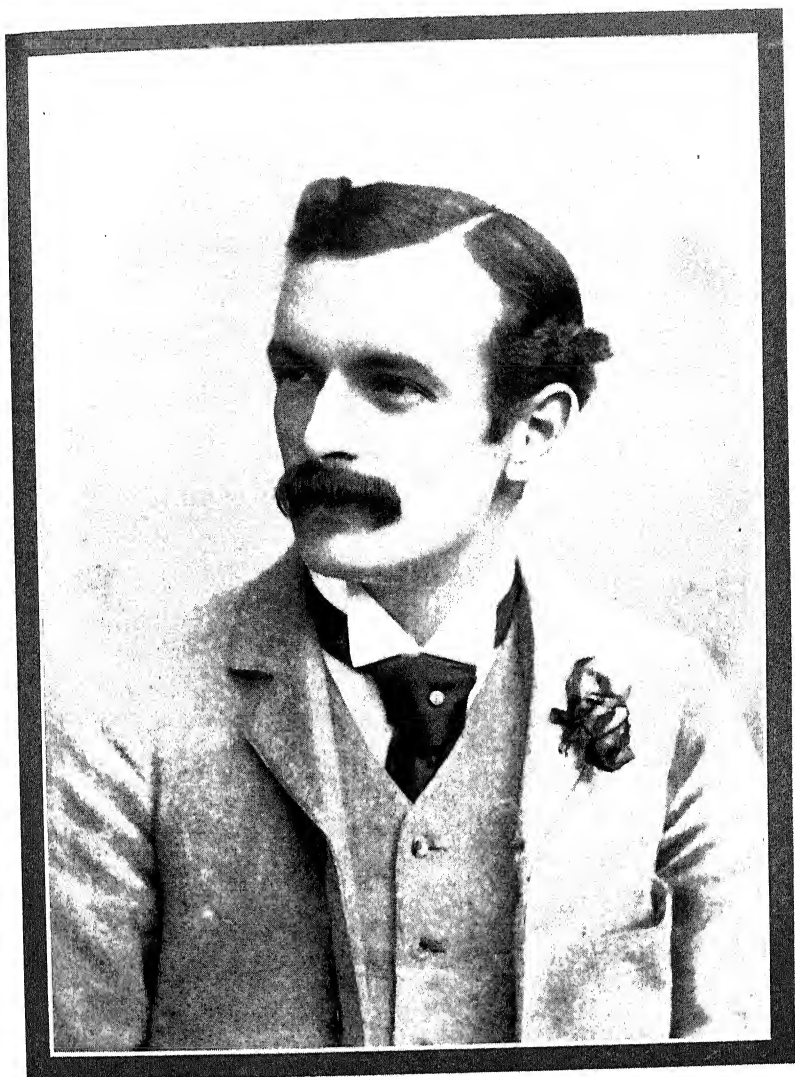
always been towards the Colonial Secretary, and he has described the Member for West Birmingham by every insulting epithet from Judas downwards. Mr. Chamberlain can afford to disregard the personal malice towards himself which instigated the petty clique of the Birmingham Liberal Association to issue their invitation to Mr. Lloyd George ; but the mere fact of bringing this ' politician ' to Birmingham—the city which has given so nobly and so freely of her sons to fight her battles—to invite such a man as Mr. Lloyd George to speak in the Town Hall is an insult to that city and to every loyal inhabitant." The naïve regret expressed in this astounding effusion that we in this country had no longer a Court of Star Chamber to put on the rack such persons as were offensive to Ministers ; and that we did not, as they used to do not long since in such enlightened parts of Europe as Naples and Austria, immure our political critics for years in noisome dungeons, no doubt escaped the notice of Birmingham's zealous Unionists ; but one thing they read plainly in it, and that was an incitement to make the place too hot for the unspeakable Welshman ! No doubt they pondered this in their hearts ; then went home to study the tactics of their fathers in the Aston Riots of 1884, when Lord Randolph Churchill and Sir Stafford Northcote barely escaped with their lives from a Birmingham mob which then happened to be in the service of a Radical taskmaster !

The Birmingham Liberal Association was greatly alarmed at the tone of the local Press, and duly conveyed a warning to Lloyd George. But it goes without saying that the threat of danger only strengthened his resolution to speak. To the warnings of friends, the Chief Constable of Birmingham (then new to his work) added his remonstrances. Lloyd George thanked them one and all for their solicitude, but never for a moment swerved from his determination to see

the business through. The meeting was due to be held on December 18th, 1901. All day long sandwichmen paraded the streets of Birmingham bearing placards calling upon citizens to assemble at the Town Hall—"to defend the King, the Government, and Mr. Chamberlain, and to denounce Brum Boers." A portrait of the famous Pro-Boer, as well as the time of his expected arrival at New Street Station, were prominently printed in the papers; and it was only the personal authority of the Lord Mayor which prevented them from also disclosing the name and address of his host. Never can it have been truer to say that the wrecking of a public meeting, and the murder of an unpopular politician, were deliberately planned in cold blood.

Lloyd George actually arrived by an earlier train than the one which had been indicated in the papers; and as the crowds were even then menacing in appearance, he was met only by his hostess and her little niece, with whom he drove to their house in Hagley Road. It had been the intention of the Chairman of the local Liberal Association to preside at the meeting, but he was old and infirm, and scores of threatening letters had reached him. His place was taken by Mr. A. C. Osler, a well-known Birmingham Liberal, who was on terms of personal friendship with Chamberlain. It was to be a ticket meeting; and the three resolutions to be submitted to it, which had already been published in the Birmingham newspapers, carefully avoided all reference to the war.

When Lloyd George reached the Town Hall, at 6.30 p.m., there was a crowd in the surrounding streets of at least thirty thousand; and the Chief Constable had a body of 350 policemen drawn up in readiness. He managed to slip into the hall unperceived. Presently the doors were opened, and the crowd surged in, some with tickets, the majority with none. It was evident that those who desired to wreck the



*Wickens Studio,  
Upper Bangor.*

MR. LLOYD GEORGE AT THE TIME OF THE BOER WAR.

meeting were in a majority. Every sort of noise was being made, including the singing of the popular war songs of the day. When Lloyd George stepped on to the platform the din became terrific. Not a word of the Chairman's speech could be heard. When his own turn came, Lloyd George faced the raging thousands with his pleasant smile. Again and again he essayed to speak, and an occasional sentence became audible above the noise. Only one brief comment on the disgraceful scene being enacted before his eyes reached the ears of the reporters: "The Union Jack is the pride and property of our common country, and no man who really loves it could do anything but dissent from its being converted into Mr. Chamberlain's pocket-handkerchief. It is enough for me to emphasise the fact that the Press of Birmingham, which used to be the champion of free speech, has for days been stirring up its friends to deny liberty of debate to us solely on the ground that we are an insignificant minority in the town. And in this respect, I may also add—because it has a significance of its own—that the Liberal Unionist Press has behaved more disgracefully than the Conservative papers of the town."

Presently there was a rush for the platform by a crowd of men, some armed with sticks, others with hammers, others with knives, and some with bricks tied up in barbed wire. This was no harmless horseplay, but a murderous attempt to get at the victim. The police, however, closed around him, and beat back the attack. Then it was that the Chief Constable ordered everyone to leave the platform, as otherwise lives would inevitably be lost. Those who sat nearest to him have testified that, all through this terrible scene, Lloyd George himself was the calmest person in the hall. By that time the crowd outside was getting busy, smashing the windows of the Town Hall, and battering in the doors with poles which they had carried thither for that purpose.

Unionist orators, hitherto accounted respectable men, harangued the mob, urging it to ever greater violence. By degrees the police were overborne by the immensely superior numbers of the crowd, and it began to look as if Lloyd George could not possibly quit the Town Hall alive. It was the Chief Constable who suggested to him that he should put on policeman's uniform and try to pass out unrecognised. The plan was adopted. Luckily the night was dark, snow was falling, and the crowd was in too great a frenzy of hate and anger to recognise a man in disguise, especially one with whose features they were not familiar. A small procession of constables was formed, with Lloyd George in the middle; the doors were thrown open, and they marched out. Even then a few recognised him; but fortunately their voices were drowned in the bloodthirsty yells of their fellows. Lloyd George got safely back to his host's house, and then the Chief Constable went out to assure the crowd that he was no longer inside the Town Hall. Of the 350 policemen on duty, almost all had been seriously wounded. Finally the Chief Constable had to order his men to charge with their batons, and in this charge one member of the crowd was killed. Twenty-seven others were so seriously wounded in the course of the evening that they had to be taken to hospital.

The mob was pleased with its night's work. It had inflicted considerable damage on the Town Hall, for which the Liberal Association would be made to pay. Best of all, it had prevented the detested Pro-Boer from speaking. An enthusiastic telegram was dispatched to Chamberlain: "Lloyd George, the traitor, was not allowed to say a word. Two hundred thousand citizens and others passed resolutions of confidence in the Government, and of admiration for your unique and fearless efforts for King, country, and people." A gracious message was received in reply. Not

many days afterwards Chamberlain was accosted by a fellow-member in the House of Commons with the remark: "What's the matter with Birmingham? Everyone expected you would kill Lloyd George. Why did you let him escape?" "What is everybody's business is nobody's business," was Chamberlain's laconic reply.

Lloyd George had intended to leave Birmingham by an early train on the morrow of the meeting; but on being told that Chamberlain would be travelling to London by that train, and that there might be serious rioting at the station, he deferred his departure until later. On his way to New Street he was recognised by many on the way, and these hissed and booed: but no further violence was attempted, and he got safely back to London. Even in Birmingham there was much disapproval of the riot; and outside the Chamberlain citadel disgust was deep and universal. The conduct of the Lord Mayor, and of the Chief Constable, was criticised; but most of the criticism, and that quite justly, was directed against the Unionist newspapers. Asquith at that time disliked Lloyd George's opinions about the war almost as much as did Chamberlain; but he spoke his own thoughts, as well as those of the country at large, in some trenchant sentences in a speech delivered on the day after the famous meeting. "It will be a very bad day," he declared, "if it ever dawns—and sometimes one is tempted to think that it is nearer than we ever expected—when the free expression of opinion in this country is not going to be tolerated, and is going to be put down by force, by terrorism. Where is there any man amongst us—I do not care what views he holds—who has not read with shame and indignation the account of what appears to have been the organised and concerted rowdyism by which, in a town not far from here, a man who is supposed to hold unpopular opinions was deprived on Wednesday night of the opportunity of expressing

them? I do not suppose, if those intended speeches had ever been allowed to be made, that I should have found myself in entire agreement with what was said. But what has that got to do with the matter? There is no possession which an Englishman values more highly than the inestimable and inalienable right of free speech. If you don't like my views, and have not the good sense to listen to them in good temper and in silence, then stay away. If you wish to choose the more excellent part, go and hear the views of the person from whom you differ, and very likely you will go back strengthened and confirmed in your own. One thing that is not allowable, because it strikes at the very foundations of democratic freedom and democratic government, is that a man whose views do not happen to be those of the majority should be denied a fair hearing. It was a gross outrage upon the elementary rights of citizenship." No one would dissent from that judgment to-day.

It would be anticlimax to speak of any of Lloyd George's Boer War meetings after describing the Birmingham riot: suffice it to say that he was in no degree deterred from continuing his anti-Government campaign by the narrow escape which he had had. Other towns, though certainly no less patriotic, were more civil in their behaviour than Birmingham; and the local authorities took good care that mob rule should not prevail. At Bristol the fire brigade was called out; and the playing of their hoses upon the crowd effectually kept the temperature below rioting-point.

The war now was evidently in its last stages. Although there remained in England the same dogged determination to see it through, the early enthusiasm had completely disappeared. There was a good deal of admiration for the Boers, and plenty of that most praiseworthy reluctance to ill-treat the fellow who is down. Statesmen, even on the Government side, were also beginning to realise that peace



would have to be made on a basis of trusting the Boers to some extent at least. Nor were they altogether regardless of the fact that the war had completely isolated this country diplomatically, and caused her to be regarded with suspicion and dislike by every foreign nation without exception. Never, perhaps, has England been so lonely as she was in the last year of the Boer War. The Triple Alliance had made of Germany, Austria-Hungary, and Italy a solid block. France and Russia were associated in a counter-alliance. England was outside both orbits and had several causes of quarrel with France, Russia, and Germany. No wonder that the moment was deemed propitious by the Kaiser for hinting to these countries that the moment had come for a joint onslaught upon the British Empire. Two things only prevented such a thing from happening: the fact that France hated Germany even more than she hated England; and the fact that the British Navy was supreme, and so could forcibly prevent any attack upon this country and her scattered possessions. That was the moment, in fact, which saw the sowing of the seeds of the World War: for in it the Kaiser saw in a flash that so long as England remained mistress of the seas, no Continental alliance, however powerful, would be able to do her much harm. The moral of the lesson sank deep into his mind; and the series of German Navy Laws was the direct outcome. The final stage of the war came quickly. Queen Victoria had died in January, 1901, and the new King was most anxious that peace should be made with no undue delay. For not only was he by nature a peace lover, but he also had a far clearer realisation than his Ministers of the perils of the European situation.

There was no agreement, however, among those in authority as to the course to be taken to bring the war to an end. Milner was emphatically in favour of conquest and

unconditional surrender. Kitchener, on the contrary, favoured an amnesty, followed by moderate terms. Rosebery, whose influence in the country was still immense, and who had never been associated with the Pro-Boers, threw his weight on the side of a negotiated peace. At last victory in this clash of policies went to the moderates; and peace was made by treaty, not by unconditional surrender. In this way the self-respect of the Boers was not unduly outraged. The peace was signed on May 31st, 1902, after a war which had cost Great Britain 5,700 killed in action, 16,000 dead from wounds and sickness, and 22,800 wounded; £250,000,000 had been added to the National Debt.

The Government had become extremely unpopular in the country; nevertheless, the Opposition was far too deeply divided to be able to offer a resistance commensurate with its numbers and the excellence of the opportunity. The Liberal Imperialist group, few in number though they were, included some of the ablest and most energetic men in the Party; and they adhered impenitently to their defence of Milner and the sterner policy which was advocated by him, right to the end. Meanwhile Campbell-Bannerman had been gravitating more and more in the direction of the out-and-out Pro-Boers; and although the rank and file of the Party were solidly behind him, it looked as if he had forfeited for ever the confidence of men like Rosebery, Asquith, Haldane, and Grey. There was much mutual recrimination between the two wings of the Party, Rosebery going so far as to write to *The Times* announcing his "definite separation" from Campbell-Bannerman. A "Liberal League" was formed by these Imperialists, with Rosebery at its head, and Asquith, Grey, and Henry Fowler as vice-presidents, and it threatened to run candidates of its own at the next General Election. These schismatics, however, had misread the mind of the Party. Ordinary Liberals, inside and outside

the House of Commons, were only too thankful that the divergencies of opinion within the Party occasioned by the war had not inseparably broken it in pieces ; and they had no patience with a little clique of clever men who apparently wanted to perpetuate these dissensions now that the war was over. Nor were the leaders of the Liberal League agreed upon their own peace-time policy ; for Rosebery had recanted his Home Rule creed, while Asquith and Grey were committed to it as deeply as ever. A pretty plain intimation was given to the leaders by the organisations in the constituencies that a schismatic movement would not be tolerated ; and the only apparent consequence of the threatened rupture was the rallying of all Liberals under the leadership of Campbell-Bannerman.

The Boer War exerted a profound influence on Lloyd George's political career. Down to 1899 he had been known throughout Wales as the most doughty champion that the Principality had possessed for five hundred years ; and he had won considerable fame in the House of Commons, as well as on platforms in England, as a skilful debater and an inspiring speaker. The war enabled him to give evidence of other qualities—dauntless courage, independence of mind, and the possession of principles held with iron tenacity. Again and again he had risked his life ; and with his life he had also risked his reputation and career. Henceforward he was respected as much as he was admired. Moreover, for two whole years he had stood in the centre of the limelight, as conspicuous a figure, and as much-talked-about a man, as any politician outside the ranks of the Ministry. No other name, not that of Chamberlain himself, on a poster was better guarantee of a packed meeting. In the House of Commons he had grown immensely in stature as a dauntless, resourceful, and telling debater. No other man, however experienced and distinguished, had

shown himself better able to stand up to Chamberlain; and in their many combats it was seldom that he did not emerge victorious. Thus, from being a Welsh politician, he had become a British politician. Without in the slightest degree losing his hold upon his own countrymen, henceforward he could count upon hundreds of thousands of loyal supporters in England as well. He had lost none of his interest in Welsh affairs—as the fights over the Education Act of 1902, and the Disestablishment Bill, were to prove—but he had come to realise that in the big questions of the hour—the development of the British Empire, peace, and the improving of the conditions of the poor—England and Wales had an equal interest; and that consequently by serving the one he would be serving the other. The contention of some Welsh Nationalists, that Lloyd George, some time about the year 1900, “deserted” Wales, dazzled by the brighter glory of the English stage, is ridiculous: it presumes an antithesis between the interests of England and those of Wales, whereas they were, in fact, in all essentials, identical.

The year 1902 constitutes a sort of watershed in Lloyd George's career. Up to that time he had invariably been the champion of minorities, and of unpopular causes. Those outside Wales who knew of him tended to regard him as a clever and eloquent, but somewhat narrow-minded, politician. A few leading statesmen, as we have already seen, had discovered in him the makings of a Cabinet Minister; nevertheless it was, so far as England was concerned, a rather lonely furrow that he had been ploughing. The strain upon him had also been tremendous. Fortunately a delicate adolescence was ripening into an exceptionally robust manhood; otherwise he would have succumbed before the arduous toil, and the mental tension, of those years of strenuous uphill work. Even more important was it for

him then, as later, that he possessed an exceptionally cheerful and buoyant temperament, with a resilience that refused to be cast down in the face of adversity. Still, no man, however healthy in body and mind, could pass unscathed through the difficulties and dangers which had hitherto attended his path in life. Poverty had beset his youth ; and his entrance into the professional world had been infinitely harder than is that of the vast majority of talented youths. He had had to fight for appreciation in the courts. He had had to fight for recognition in the House of Commons. And the marks of these battles were easily to be discerned upon him. In some respects the school of difficulty and adversity through which he had passed had been a splendid thing for him : it had trained him in self-reliance, and brought out his remarkable qualities of courage, audacity, and perseverance. But there was a debit side to the account as well, and we must not overlook it. He had become unduly pugnacious, unnecessarily suspicious of the people and institutions from which he himself had suffered. Parsons and squires had come to be invested in his eyes with a malignity which few of them really possessed. The portraits of him taken at the turn of the century reveal a face of intense keenness, strength, and determination ; but it is hardly the face of a happy man, of a man who has come to amicable terms with his fellows and the world in general. That poise, and self-satisfaction in the best sense of the term, which are natural characteristics of all the later photographs, had not yet been acquired. His friends observed that the Boer War had aged him greatly. At its outbreak he was still boyish in appearance, his dark wavy locks, worn fairly long even then, without a single grey hair. But at its close the hair had become grey about the temples, and the youthful features had set in sterner and manlier mould.

Down to 1902 Lloyd George had, in fact, been sowing:

after that he was to begin to reap. The years of hard work, of diligent attendance at the House of Commons, of hundreds of platform speeches, were to bear their fruit. For he had now, without any doubt, captured his own Party. Henceforward he would count with the greatest in its ranks; and it would be unthinkable for a Liberal Government to be formed without him. The great struggle over the Balfour Education Act completely obliterated the differences which had existed during the Boer War between him and so many of his fellow-Liberals. With a mere handful of exceptions, every Liberal was firm in his opposition to that Act; and when Lloyd George fought it tooth and nail, in Parliament and in the country, he had the enthusiastic backing of a wellnigh unanimous Party, as well as of a great majority of the electorate.

In other ways also fortune now seemed to smile on Lloyd George. His fifth child, destined quite obviously after the tragic death of Mair to be his favourite—Megan Arvon—was born in 1902. She was to become the apple of her father's eye, his inseparable companion, whether in the simple pleasures of country life, on his journeys abroad, or at the great international conferences to which he so frequently went as Prime Minister. But her day was not yet; for Mair did not die until 1907; and while she lived Lloyd George loved her with a passionate love which could brook the existence of no rival.

The home life also became more comfortable when the family moved from the gloomy surroundings of Gray's Inn to the more rustic atmosphere of Wandsworth Common. There they settled in a roomy villa with a pleasant garden. Without some sort of garden it would be difficult to imagine Lloyd George existing at all; for a garden means those things which have always meant so much to him—the open-air siesta after lunch, flowers and vegetables and fruit trees;

and above all, perhaps, the possession of dogs, a long succession of which, of all sizes and breeds, he has owned and delighted in. A portrait taken of him at that time shows him seated in a garden chair, the inevitable newspaper in his hand, and a pug sitting contentedly by his side. At Brynawel, at Brynawelon, at Walton Heath, and at Bron-y-de the same scene could be paralleled a thousand times in the course of the ensuing thirty years ; for of gardens and dogs this man has never tired.

Among Lloyd George's suburban neighbours in 1902 was a Welshman—Timothy Davies—with whom, and his family, Lloyd George was soon on terms of warmest friendship. Timothy Davies was a wealthy draper, who was later to be Mayor of Fulham, and to represent that constituency in Parliament. Like Lloyd George, he was an ardent Liberal, and a no less zealous Nonconformist. For many years he was by far the wealthier of the two men, and his house was ever at the disposal of the rising politician. Mrs. Lloyd George and the five children would often be at Criccieth when Parliamentary and legal duties compelled her husband to remain in London. On such occasions he would sometimes spend weeks at a time under his friend's hospitable roof. Among those who gave much indispensable help to Lloyd George in these years of poverty and difficulty, Timothy Davies must hold a prominent and honoured place. The two friends would play golf together. And occasionally they travelled abroad. On one such occasion the two were joined by their common friend—the Reverend Gwynor Davies of Barmouth—and all three shared the same cabin on board the *Argonaut*, on one of the first Mediterranean cruises organised by Sir Henry Lunn. Mahaffy lectured to them on Carthage, and Oscar Browning on the Moors in Morocco and Spain. Alex Hill, the delightful and scholarly Master of Downing, was also of the party. Many years

afterwards, when Lloyd George was Prime Minister, Oscar Browning—then living in extreme old age in Rome—wrote a long letter to one of the travellers, recalling the pleasures of the cruise, and very characteristically taking credit to himself for having predicted even then that the comparatively unknown Welsh politician would one day attain to the highest office under the Crown. The "Pro-Boer" had been looked at with no great favour at first by most of his fellow-voyagers; but his personal magnetism, his high spirits, his witty and brilliant conversation, long before the end of the cruise, had made him the most popular man on board.

No statesman has ever excelled Lloyd George in his understanding of the Press, or been on more cordial terms with journalists. Balfour, it was known, hardly ever glanced at a newspaper. And Asquith, although he read the most important papers carefully, had no love for journalists, and always shrank from the publicity which association with them implied. Lloyd George, however, revelled in publicity; for he fully realised that Parliamentarians could no longer, even if they wished, keep up the somewhat Olympian attitude of the Great Victorians. For good or evil, the Press had now come to be, in some respects, as powerful as Parliament itself; and every politician must condescend to work on amicable terms with it. Lloyd George was always kind to reporters and interviewers; and they in return rewarded him with a full measure of publicity. The *Daily News* at the beginning of the Boer War had been an Imperialist organ; but a new Pro-Boer editor had been installed; and Lloyd George, together with some others who agreed with him, had acquired a controlling influence in the paper. This transaction was part of the mining and counter-mining operations by which the Imperialist and Pro-Boer wings of the Liberal Party sought to circumvent each other. Sir I. Cook—the editor of the *Daily News*—had been a



thorn in the side of the Pro-Boers. He was consequently dismissed, and the paper staffed by reliable anti-Imperialists. It was a deft stroke, in part an act of retaliation for the conduct of the Liberal Imperialists, who controlled the *Daily Chronicle*, in dismissing the fine journalist and sturdy Pro-Boer—H. W. Massingham—from the editorship. Cook now took Massingham's place on the *Daily Chronicle*; and Massingham served on the *Daily News* and the *Manchester Guardian* until 1907, when he began his brilliant editorship of *The Nation*. The capturing of newspapers was beginning to be a recognised feature of political warfare in England.

It must not be forgotten that Lloyd George, at the close of the Boer War, was still a practising solicitor. The London branch of the firm, which he had founded on first coming to live in the metropolis, had prospered. For some years after 1890 he devoted a great deal of his time to professional work; but as political labours grew increasingly heavier, and his platform speeches more frequent, it became impossible for him to attend the office with that regularity which a client normally expects of his solicitor. It was not, however, until he became President of the Board of Trade, in the autumn of 1905, that Lloyd George bade a complete and final farewell to his old profession. The last case of any importance on which he was engaged as advocate was the Penrhyn Quarry dispute of 1900. For years a long drawn-out struggle had persisted between the great Caernarvonshire magnate and his quarrymen. One of the incidents in the contest was a prosecution, instituted on behalf of Lord Penrhyn in 1900, against a number of strikers for riot and disorder. The case was to be tried at Bangor Petty Sessions; and as the famous advocate—Sir Charles Mathew—was to appear for the prosecution, it occurred to the men that it would be a capital thing to get Lloyd George to

conduct the defence. Mathews has spoken in glowing terms of his opponent's skill as an advocate, of his grasp of the case, and of his devastating cross-examination. So successful were his efforts, that most of the accused were acquitted and not a single one was sentenced to imprisonment. It was a fine and appropriate close to a brief, but brilliant, legal career. Who can doubt that had worldly circumstances led Lloyd George to the Bar he would have taken rank with its most illustrious ornaments?

## CHAPTER EIGHT

### THE END OF TORY GOVERNMENT [1902-1905]

**B**ETWEEN the close of the South African War and the coming into power of a Liberal Government, the Conservatives, now with Balfour as Prime Minister, enjoyed three years of office. They had been elected at the "Khaki Election" of 1900 by something resembling a referendum on the subject of the war. When, then, they proceeded to bring forward highly contentious domestic measures, it is hardly surprising that there was a good deal of grumbling, and that not only on the part of Liberals, but also on the part of the many Liberal Unionists who had been zealous for the war, but felt no sort of urge to assist the Church and the brewers.

A real need of drastic educational reform there unquestionably was. Countries like Germany were going ahead, with their well-organised system of schools and colleges; while English education remained a thing of shreds and patches, the product of illogical compromises and makeshifts arrived at over a long period of years. There was urgent need for greater centralisation, greater systematisation, better buildings, better equipment, better teachers, and better co-ordination of the multifarious educational authorities of the country. So patent was this need that a few Liberals (most notable among them Haldane), who knew the superiority of the educational system of countries like Germany, France, and Scotland, and who realised what a handicap our own want of system was coming to be in the

international competition of the twentieth century, were willing to support the Balfour Bill notwithstanding the obvious injustices which it contained.

Elementary education, in 1902, was controlled by a dual system, each side of it at war with the other. On the one hand were the Board Schools, controlled and maintained by the community, in which there were no theological tests, and no specific religious dogma was taught. On the other hand were the so-called National Schools, owned and controlled by the Established Church, and run on purely sectarian principles. In these, theological tests were imposed upon the teachers, and every endeavour was used to make good Churchmen of the pupils. It was notorious that the majority of National Schools were inefficient, their fabrics much below the desirable standard, and their teaching staff worse than indifferent. Worst of all, since in thousands of villages the National School was the only place of education, the children of Nonconformist parents were perforce subjected to the proselytising efforts of the parson, and their educational careers blighted if they refused to abandon the faith of the hearth. The real need of the country was to have all these schools placed upon a non-denominational basis, and to subject them without exception to proper inspection and control.

What the Education Bill of 1902 proposed was to retain the National Schools, and to put them on the rates. It vested the control of education in a committee of the County Councils, not directly elected; and the denominational schools themselves were to be managed by a committee, upon which the ratepayers who provided the money were only indirectly represented. Such as they were, their representatives were to be in a perpetual minority, in order that the schools might always be managed by denominational control. The Bill was a challenge to the democratic

axiom that there must be no expenditure of public money without popular control. It was a challenge to Nonconformists in particular, inasmuch as it perpetuated, and indeed aggravated, a situation which had always appeared to them unjust. There was immediate protest, followed by denunciation of the Bill, from all the Free Church bodies of England and Wales. The measure compelled them to pay a new rate towards the maintenance, in hundreds of elementary schools, of religious teaching which they repudiated. In hundreds of country parishes they were forced to send their children to schools controlled by the parson, and pervaded with a clerical atmosphere where the pupils would be taught to regard their parents as schismatics, and the chapels in which they worshipped on Sundays as places altogether inferior to the Parish Church. The Bill further left three-fourths of the training colleges, and a large proportion of teaching posts, barred against all who did not conform to the Established religion.

The "Nonconformist Conscience" of England, which had been so powerful a factor in national affairs throughout the second half of the nineteenth century, had not yet begun to show many signs of that strange decay which, in the course of another thirty years, was to reduce it to a mere shadow of its former self. A great fight had been fought on behalf of freedom of conscience; a fight in which Quakers like John Bright, Unitarians like Joseph Chamberlain and H. W. Crosskey, orthodox Independents like R. W. Dale, and agnostics like John Morley, had all arrayed themselves under the same flag of liberty. Above all others Chamberlain had been the leader in this struggle. He had now, however, deserted the cause, though without ceasing to believe in it; and on the political side there was room for a new leader of first-rate calibre. None of the established leaders of the Liberal Party in 1902 were

Nonconformists of the old pugnacious breed. Rosebery, Asquith, Harcourt, Grey, Haldane, Campbell-Bannerman—not one of them represented the true spirit of Nonconformity. Birrell, it is true, was the son of an eminent Baptist divine; but the faith had come to mean nothing to him. James Bryce was a convinced Presbyterian; and he had made a plucky stand on behalf of freedom of conscience when he won a scholarship at Oxford many years before; but this erudite and high-minded scholar was not a first-class fighter. The army was obviously prepared for battle; it required only the presence of a general to lead it on. Among the ecclesiastics there were still plenty of good fighting men. Dr. Clifford was a mighty controversialist. So, too, was Robertson Nicoll, whose pen was one of the most powerful weapons employed in the campaign. And when the learned Dr. Fairbairn—Principal of Mansfield College, Oxford—pronounced the words: "We will not submit"—everybody knew that it was to be war to the knife between the forces of Nonconformity and the new Education Bill. Nor were the Liberal leaders, and the Liberal rank and file who happened not to be Nonconformists, slow in making it clear that they, too, would fight the Bill to the bitter end. Rosebery and Campbell-Bannerman denounced it energetically on the platform; while Asquith and Henry Fowler seconded the vigorous onslaughts of Lloyd George in the House of Commons. "What is our duty?" asked the Liberal leader. "It is to oppose this Bill with all our might in the House of Commons and in the country. In the House, I think I can say with a pretty confident spirit the Liberal Party will be united not only in opposition to the Bill, but in a strong, fervid, and strenuous opposition."

\* But although no one could fairly accuse Liberals in general of slackness in their opposition to the Education Bill, there

can be no doubt that as the struggle proceeded it came to be identified more and more with Lloyd George. He stepped into the place rendered vacant by Chamberlain's defection, and thus became the champion of militant Nonconformity. Into this fight he put the whole of his strength. For a whole year, as his friends declared, he talked and thought nothing but education. For here was a question which meant far more to Lloyd George than a mere balance of argument on one side or the other: he saw in it the whole tragedy of his own schooldays fully exemplified; and that roused him to a passion of strenuous resistance. If by any effort of his the children of England and Wales could be rescued from what he had endured as a boy, then rescued they should be. Little wonder that his words fell hot and scathing upon the sponsors of the Bill; for they came straight from the heart. It would have been easy for Lloyd George to have made eloquent speeches in denunciation of the Education Bill couched in vague terms; but that would not have proved an effective form of opposition in the House. Instead, he applied himself with indefatigable industry to the mastering of the whole case. He devoured Blue Books; and despite his constitutional distaste of drudgery, he studied meticulously every clause in the obnoxious measure. His reward came swiftly and abundantly; for in the weeks during which the Education Bill was debated in the House and in Committee, there was no more acute critic, none with a more lynx-eyed alertness in detecting loopholes, none with a greater readiness in obstruction.

Lloyd George's fight against the Education Bill falls into two parts: the part which consisted of resistance in the House, backed by platform speeches in the country; and the part which consisted in the organisation of practical resistance to its operation in Wales. The author of the

Bill was Balfour; but as time went on, the championing of the Church schools became more and more the concern of Lord Hugh Cecil. The latter was as convinced a Churchman as was Lloyd George a Nonconformist; and the part which these two men played in these debates resembled in some respects (though assuredly not in acerbity) the mighty duels fought between Lloyd George and Chamberlain over the Boer War. Long ere the campaign was over, the two combatants had come to feel a real respect for one another. They recognised each other's sincerity; and more than once it became apparent that left to themselves they could have worked out a satisfactory compromise. Chamberlain was preoccupied with South African affairs; and in any case disliked a measure which went counter to a part of his old Radical creed which he had never recanted. Nevertheless, he advised his Liberal Unionist followers to vote for the Bill, thereby incurring some stinging rebukes at the hands of Lloyd George, who declared that "the advocacy of the Bill is the last act of treachery in the career of one who has sold many of his convictions". Chamberlain had much difficulty in persuading his Nonconformist followers who had become Unionists with him to accept the Bill; and threats and persuasions had to be freely resorted to.

In the committee stage of the Bill Lloyd George contested every clause, and almost every word in every clause, with relentless pertinacity. Never for a moment was he absent from the House when the Bill was under discussion. He fought hard to secure amendments, and that not always without success. It was no occasion for eloquent speeches; but even when dealing with the driest technicalities of what is at best regarded as a particularly dry subject, his wit and readiness of repartee enlivened the tedium of many a weary hour of debate. "So we are to have dear food and



cheap catechisms," he exclaimed, when the Government declared that the newly-imposed corn tax was to be devoted to the denominational schools. That he was as eager as Balfour himself, or any other supporter of the Bill, to reform our educational system is clear from reports which we have of the debates. "Secondary education in the rural districts", he declared on one occasion, "would do more to solve the problem of agricultural distress than anything else. After all, the best manure you can give the land is brains." In a solemn passage full of statesmanlike prescience he warned the House of the advantages which some of our trade rivals abroad were beginning to reap from the fact that they possessed a better system of education. "Menacing rivals", he said, "stand in our industrial path, and education is the best means of keeping abreast or of getting ahead of them. The ship of State is making its way through the midst of rocks; and what is the Government's proposal? To put the chaplain on the bridge."

But neither protests from influential bodies in the country, nor opposition in the House, availed to arrest the passage of the Education Bill, which, in due course, became law. It was then that the second line of Lloyd George's battle array was disclosed. The Act inflicted an injustice upon English Nonconformists; but when all was said and done, Freechurchmen were a minority in England, and the Church was the established church of the nation. In Wales, however, it was far otherwise. There the injustice was infinitely more serious, owing to the fact that the vast majority of people were Nonconformists, while neither the Church nor its schools were regarded by them as a national possession. Wales, then, would be justified in going a great deal further along the road of opposition to the Act than England, inasmuch as it was not only an outrage

upon its religious convictions, but also an insult to its nationality. Resistance, he argued, was consequently justified; and having made up his mind to that effect, he proceeded to organise it.

"Passive Resistance" was invented in England, under the leadership of Dr. Clifford and Robertson Nicoll. It meant a refusal to pay the rate levied according to the provisions of the Act. Hundreds of English Nonconformists warmly welcomed this form of practical protest, and dared the law to do its worst. Forced sales of goods and chattels then became a matter of everyday occurrence; and scores of highly respected Nonconformists were even put into prison. The electorate was apathetic, as it always is in England when educational policy is under discussion; and it did not, as it could have done, put on the County Councils a majority hostile to the Act. Passive Resistance, in these circumstances, seemed to be the only possible method of effective protest; and Lloyd George entertained no doubt at all about its justice or propriety.

In Wales, in any case, there was far more to be said on behalf of a policy of resistance. There the majority, and that an overwhelming one, whether Parliamentary representatives, or County Councillors, are counted, was dead against the Act. Had the Welsh people been consulted, they would certainly have rejected it with a ten to one majority. It was because Wales had not been consulted that the Act was now being enforced in the Principality. So long, then, as Wales was denied the right (a right accorded to Scotland by the Act of Union) of managing its own educational affairs, the case for resisting, by every possible means short of crime, was a good one. The case was all the stronger in view of the strenuous, self-denying, and most successful efforts of the people of Wales as a whole to repair the serious defects of the educational

system by establishing a Welsh university, completely free from denominational handicaps; and intermediate schools, in which plain Bible teaching was given, to the complete satisfaction of everybody.

In many Welsh villages the entire land of the parish belonged to one or more squires, all of them Churchmen, who persistently refused to sell a single inch of it for the purpose of building any kind of school other than a Church school. That was an old grievance, bitterly resented in the country districts of Wales. It was a particularly objectionable consequence of the territorial monopoly enjoyed by clergy and squirearchy. In countless cases the squire had refused to sell or let land for the purpose of building on it a Nonconformist place of worship. Tyranny so odious as that had practically died out by 1902; but the fact that it had not been possible to build non-denominational schools at an earlier date meant now that the Church had, in hundreds of places, a monopoly of elementary education.

As we have already seen, Lloyd George firmly believed that, in England, Passive Resistance was fully justified; but he had no great hope of anything that might result from such a policy. For Wales he organised a far more ingenious, and much more effectual, form of opposition. Unlike England, Wales had packed its County Councils with Nonconformists, all of them zealous opponents of the Education Act. Lloyd George's plan was to persuade the Councils, while breaking no letter of the law, to reduce it to a nullity. Wales was really interested in education, in a way in which England never has been; and it was not difficult to make the new Act the topic of discussion and debate in every house in the Principality. For the first time in his life, Lloyd George's wonderful gift for organisation on a large scale found ample field for its exercise. Wales is not an easy country to unite. There are deep-seated

differences of dialect, of temperament, of economic interest, and even of geography; and few are the questions on which it has spoken with one voice. It was Lloyd George's crowning triumph that he brought every council in the country without exception into line in the kind of resistance which he was advocating to the Education Act.

There were many enthusiasts on the Welsh County Councils who were eager to refuse altogether to enforce the Act; but Lloyd George was opposed to so unconstitutional a procedure. A measure, he argued, when it has become the law of the land, must be obeyed; if not "then government in this country will be conducted on the same lines as it is in the South American Republics—by a series of revolutions". Lloyd George was far too good a Parliamentary man to countenance an attack upon the law by direct action. After enumerating four principles which ought to govern education policy in Wales—viz. (1) Equality of Citizenship, (2) Equality of Creed, (3) Equality of Opportunity for the Children in the Elementary Schools, (4) Equality of Nationality—he proceeded to outline his proposed method for securing as many as possible of them by the agency of the new Education Act. Briefly, his policy was that of "No control, no cash"; and it professed to be a policy which could be pursued if the letter of the Act were to be strictly adhered to, and its spirit ignored. His advice was that only the Parliamentary grant should be transmitted to the schools, and that no rate aid should be afforded them unless the trustees consented to public control of the funds voted, as well as to the abandonment of all religious tests for the teachers employed. But he urged also that a compromise should be striven for, the basis of which would be the so-called "Colonial" system of giving facilities for the teaching of religious doctrines favoured by the parent. For every child, he maintained, the best

religion is the one he has grown accustomed to in earliest infancy at home ; and if religion is to be taught at all in the day school, there must be no clash between it and the creed taught on the hearth and at the Sunday School. This policy seemed at first sight to be stark rebellion ; but Lloyd George had studied the Act with meticulous care, and he knew that what he was recommending was strictly in accordance with its terms. It was the policy of Portia—a pound of flesh, but not one drop of blood !

A national conference which assembled at Cardiff in 1903 accepted the whole of Lloyd George's plan of campaign ; and the electorate, in the following year, by returning an overwhelming majority of Nonconformists to the County Councils, gave its emphatic endorsement. It was to this conference that Lloyd George expounded his four principles : they were the great charter of a thoroughly democratic, and Welsh, system of education. Why should Wales, he argued, be dragged at the chariot wheels of England, especially in a matter in which England was so lamentably backward and indifferent ? " Scotland," he declared, " has her own system of education. It may be good, or it may be bad—it just depends upon taste. Some like Scotch broth, some do not. I think the Scottish system admirable, and I would recommend it for Wales. Scotchmen, with that natural intelligence which they have developed, have got hold of the right idea. They have their own system. Ireland has her own system. Her schools are managed by the priests, but she has the system because she wants it. England has her own system, if system it can be called. It is everything, higgledy-piggledy : partly sectarian, partly School Board, partly County Council ; but above all, thoroughly English."

Unfortunately, a promising attempt at compromise broke down, owing to the unyielding attitude of the clergy.

Lloyd George's old opponent—the Bishop of St. Asaph—was in favour of a concordat; but the other three Welsh bishops would have none of it. In any case it appears likely that negotiations would have broken down, for even the Bishop of St. Asaph was determined not to relinquish the parson's right to teach religion in the schools to the children of non-Church parents, while the Nonconformists were just as resolutely determined that they should do no such thing.

Having secured acceptance of his plan of action in Wales, and having won a majority of the County Councils to pledge themselves to that action, Lloyd George next raised in the House of Commons the question of the working of the Education Act. Sir William Anson, the great constitutional lawyer, and popular Warden of All Souls, who was in charge of the debate on the Government side, had expected a violent attack; but it was admitted by everybody that Lloyd George's speech was moderate and conciliatory. It contained some nasty hits at the Government; such as his warning to them, "that it is as difficult to persuade a man with strong convictions to abandon his position as it is to persuade members of the Government to abandon their posts"; but on the whole his tone was mild and business-like. Unfortunately, Anson's only reply was to attribute to the Welsh politician motives of religious bigotry, undue partisanship, and even personal ambition; and he altogether failed to show that he comprehended, even in the slightest degree, the grievance which had roused an entire nation to fury.

Soon the Government proceeded to enact a retaliatory measure, in the form of the Education Local Authority Default Bill, popularly known as the "Coercion of Wales Bill". What the measure did was to empower the Board of Education, in all cases where a County Council had

defaulted, to expend over its head the money required by the school managers, and to treat the money thus spent as a debt due from the County Council to the Crown. Had Lloyd George's restraining advice been followed by all the Welsh County Councils, there would have been no excuse at all for such an Act: but unfortunately the Councils of Carmarthenshire and Merionethshire had shown zeal far in advance of discretion, inasmuch as they had refused to administer the Education Act at all. This was indeed rebellion; and it played into the hands of those who were only too glad to find some legal justification for severity. Lloyd George made a fierce onslaught on the Coercion Act during its second reading, taunting the Government with their devotion to the interests of the Church and the liquor traffic. "The Government," he said, "found their empire tottering; and, like the Roman Empire of old, they had to buy off the Goths. One day the Goths came from Burton-on-Trent; the next from Lambeth. They threatened to sack the city. For a year or two the Education Act satisfied them; but the brewers' Endowment Act brought the hordes back. 'Our consciences will not stand this,' they said. 'I'll square that for you,' said the Prime Minister, and he put matters right with the Bill for the Coercion of Wales. It is like compounding a spree on a Saturday night by putting a threepenny-bit in the plate on Sunday." Feeling ran high during these debates; and on one occasion the entire Liberal Opposition, led by Asquith, marched out of the House as a protest against what they regarded as an unwarrantable use of the closure. No amount of opposition, however, could prevail against the Government's determination to pass the Bill, and it duly became law.

Wales proposed to resist this new Act; and another great national convention meeting at Cardiff pledged itself to

follow Lloyd George's leadership. But in truth the fight had gone out of the Government. It was torn by internal dissensions caused by Chamberlain's adoption of Tariff Reform; and was staggering on towards that overwhelming defeat which put an end to its unlamented life a year later. The Coercion Act was never enforced during 1904; and after that it was invoked as rarely as possible, and then with the most perfect diplomatic gentleness. The advent of a Liberal Government, and even more the creation in 1907 of a Welsh Department of the Board of Education, completely altered the situation, and the fires of the old controversy gradually died down. It was left to Winston Churchill, then a recent convert to Liberalism, to point the moral of the memorable struggle. "Why," he asked, "if Scotland has the educational system she chooses, should not Ireland and Wales have the educational system which they respectively want too? The more you can interest localities in education, the more generous will be the provision which they will make for it, the more effective will be the control which they will exert over the spending of the money they have themselves provided. It seems to me that the Irish demand for self-government, and the Welsh demand for devolution, ought not to go forward separately. They should go forward together, hand-in-hand, strengthening each other, and also limiting each other." The establishment of the Welsh Department of the Board of Education in 1907, and even more the appointment of the beloved Owen M. Edwards to be its head, did much to reconcile Wales to the situation; and in the course of the next few years an enormous amount was done to staff the schools with capable and enthusiastic Welsh teachers, as well as to provide efficient teaching of the Welsh language, Welsh literature and history. The majority of Welsh people probably feel that no more need



be done ; and that it now only remains to work efficiently the institutions which exist. A minority, and that an influential one, think otherwise : and there are few things, if any, in the Wales of to-day, which fall more frequently (with what justice, who can say ?) under the lash of the Welsh Nationalists than the country's educational system.

As an episode in Lloyd George's political career, the Education Bill controversy is of first-rate importance. Again he had given evidence of his passionate love for Wales, and of his determination that now one of her sons had come to wield formidable power in the highest councils of the kingdom, she should not suffer wrong. With less and less frequency did he, as the years went by, speak of Welsh problems as such ; for his interests were continually broadening. But it was only necessary for some slight to be put upon his native land, or for some legislative injustice to be done to her, and his sword would leap instantly out of its scabbard to do battle on her behalf. As he himself confessed, when some twelve years later he was addressing a vast concourse of his constituents in Caernarvon Pavilion on the subject of Disestablishment : " People complain that my speeches are violent and bitter. But I love Wales ; and when she is insulted, I simply cannot help hitting back." Some there were who thought that his leading of his countrymen into opposition to the law was unjustifiable, especially as he was now admitted on every hand to be fit for Cabinet rank. It must be remembered, however, that he always counselled the most scrupulous adherence to the letter of the Act : the evasion consisted in detecting and making use of all the loopholes which it contained. The leaders of his own party, at any rate, found nothing reprehensible in his conduct. Campbell Bannerman was loud and emphatic in his eulogy. " How magnificent," he declared, " is the attitude of Wales.

The spirit of religious liberty has been kept alive in the recesses of your mountains, and you are resolved that a measure which is repugnant to the moral feelings of the community shall not be forced upon you. Oh, but they say you are only a sort of narrow-minded Nonconformists, caring about your little sect, but caring but little for the education of your children. This is the taunt constantly pushed at Mr. Lloyd George and his friends; Mr. Lloyd George, your foremost champion—yes, and the champion of us all—against clerical pretensions and political injustice. This is the taunt levelled against them again and again by the Prime Minister—that they have thought and spoken of the religious difficulty, and not of education. All this is said to Welshmen, who have shown a devotion to higher education, whether intermediate or university, and an ability to organise it, and an interest in its progress, second to nothing south of the Tweed.”

In Wales itself the struggle had raised Lloyd George to a pinnacle of popularity which even he had never attained before. Nationalists and Nonconformists had both found in him a champion of whom they could feel justly proud. Nor was the Nonconformist world of England lacking in making its acknowledgments to him. He was, beyond question, the greatest political leader that the Free Churches had produced since the Civil War of the seventeenth century. Liberal Churchmen might, within limits, sympathise with their grievances; but the sympathy lacked depth, for they were of a different household of faith. John Bright had belonged to a religious body, as Joseph Chamberlain had belonged to another, which, though Dissenting, were somehow outside the main current of Nonconformist life. Lloyd George was the first statesman of the foremost rank who was a Nonconformist born, bred, and continuing; whose Dissent was part of his innermost

being; and who could feel intimately every beat of the Free Church heart of England. In his allegiance to the religious interests of his boyhood he has never wavered; and although his theology would no longer be considered orthodox by the old Llanystumdwy neighbours, there has been no falling away on his part from any of the essentials of the Free Churchman's creed. Chamberlain was lost to Unitarianism, as Asquith was to Congregationalism; but Lloyd George is still in every sense of the term a Baptist.

The sunshine of popularity and favour was at last beginning to shine upon this champion of unpopular causes. It is true that he never had more than half the nation behind him, until a common hatred of Germany had practically welded all the people of this island into one, and he had become its eloquent and forceful mouthpiece. But between 1904 and 1914 he was the idol of at least half the people, enthusiastically supported by the entire Liberal Party, and regarded as their own special champion by millions of working men and women, who had not as yet deserted Liberalism. The political loneliness of Lloyd George in the years after 1922 is in striking and tragic contrast with the representative character of his personality and policy in the days before the World War. Liberalism sought to do him honour by inviting him to contest East Manchester against Balfour at the forthcoming election. He refused the invitation, however, preferring, as he has continued to do ever since, to represent the people who first had chosen him as their leader in 1890. The little town of Pwllheli—one of his own boroughs—presented him with its Freedom. He was much gratified; for not only was it the first honour of its kind that he had ever received, but Pwllheli was the place where his father had been a poor schoolmaster, in the days when he was courting the sister of Richard Lloyd of Llanystumdwy. Caernarvon presented

him with an Address, and gave Mrs. Lloyd George a gold and diamond pendant. Never was he in greater request as a platform speaker throughout England and Wales than in the last three years of Tory Government; and wherever he went, huge and enthusiastic crowds assembled to welcome him. On English platforms his subjects were always political, or else belonged to that neutral territory where politics and religion meet. In Wales, however, he frequently lectured on literary themes. He was one of the first to perceive the transcendent merits of the Welsh novelist—Daniel Owen; and there are plenty of people in Wales to-day who will declare that their appreciation of *Rhys Lewis*, *Gwen Tomos*, and *Enoc Huws*, began with one of Lloyd George's lectures on those classics thirty-five years ago. Until he became a Cabinet Minister, at the end of 1905, he employed no private secretary; but Mrs. Lloyd George frequently wrote letters on his behalf. One such letter, written in 1902, is interesting for the light which it sheds upon his literary and lecturing activities. "My husband", she writes, "desires me to write to you about the lecture he is to deliver at Criccieth on the Friday after Easter. He is very busy, and cannot very well find time to prepare a new lecture, and he has forgotten his Algiers trip. He has a short lecture on 'Reading'. Would it be possible for him to give that lecture, and you to follow with the lantern slides of the trip to Algiers? If this cannot be arranged, will you let him know what the slides are, so that he can prepare some notes on each? If the Criccieth people agree to the former arrangement, he will be most grateful, as his time is so much taken up, and he has to lecture at Conway as well on the Wednesday before Easter."

At the close of the struggle over the Education Act Lloyd George was, in fact, at one of the great turning-points of

his life. Two roads lay invitingly before him. There was the old familiar road of Welsh nationalism. Again and again he had been greeted as "The Parnell of Wales", and the hold which he had, by 1904, won over the Principality was as firm as that acquired by the great Irish leader over Ireland. It would, perhaps, have been possible for him then to weld his followers into a strong and united nationalist party, aiming at complete independence in Parliament, with the object of wringing Welsh measures, and ultimately Welsh Home Rule, out of whichever party happened to be in power. Whether such a policy could have succeeded is a debatable question; for there were wide differences between the position of affairs in Wales, and the position in Ireland. Irishmen were neither Liberals nor Conservatives but simply Irish. Welshmen, on the contrary, were decidedly Liberal; and it is by no means certain that even the silver tongue of Lloyd George could have seduced them, with anything approaching to unanimity, to score a victory for Wales at the cost of voting against some big Liberal principle. It must also be borne in mind that religion counted for more in the Wales of that period than did politics; and the influence of the predominant Nonconformity was also decidedly on the side of Liberalism. Moreover, the population of Wales was small, and its Members of Parliament few in number. Seldom could a Welsh Party expect to hold the scales, as the Irish were often able to do in virtue of their superior numbers. There can be no doubt that Home Rule was the logical goal of the policy which Lloyd George and his Welsh supporters had been following.

The other road open before Lloyd George was the broader one of British statesmanship. It was an alluring road; for the scope which it offered was so much wider, and the prizes to be won so much more glittering. It would be

folly to suggest that such considerations carried no weight with him. With a man of his devouring ambition, and love of power, his belief in himself, and his desire to play a big part in big affairs, how could it be otherwise? In such an admission there is nothing in the least shameful. By degrees he had come to see that there were great causes in the world, for which he could strike a blow without in any way proving a traitor to Wales. On nine questions out of every ten, the interest of Wales was identical with that of England and Scotland; and those nine questions were by far the most important ones. The cynical may smile scornfully at this identification of self-interest and national interest. But one can afford to let the cynic smile; for on his interpretation of human motive a Chatham, a Bismarck, and a Lincoln becomes simply a hypocritical humbug. It is pleasanter, and incidentally more consistent with all that we know about the man and the circumstances, to hold that he was genuinely convinced that he could serve Wales better by devoting himself to the great task of social reform, and the destruction of harmful and unjust monopolies, than by agitating for legislative independence. He was also beginning to feel the compulsion of that wider patriotism—the patriotism of the British Empire.

The political situation in England, in 1904, was such that Lloyd George could count with some confidence upon soon finding himself in office. Everybody knew that the days of the Tory Government were numbered; and the majority of people felt quite sure that it could not win a General Election. For some time past both political parties had been manœuvring for position, with their eyes on the electorate; but neither had much to offer in the way of programme. The Liberal Party's chief asset was, of course, the intense unpopularity of the Government; and

the speeches of Liberal leaders were consequently made up, in the main, of criticism of the Cabinet's sorry record. Of alternative policies there was but little mention; and such little as there was consisted of the old topics, about which Liberals had discoursed eloquently for twenty years or more. Rosebery had been quite right when he declared that they would have to "clean the slate", though not, as he recommended, by abandoning Irish Home Rule. It was at this juncture, when there appeared to be so little inspiration and originality on either side, that Chamberlain sprang upon the country his proposals for Tariff Reform. Far as he had wandered from the paths of his Radical middle years, he had never lost sight of the "condition of the people" problem. And now he began to tour the country, reminding it of the poverty still existing, of the squalor and the ill health; reminding it also that its population and its trade were decaying; and passing into the keeping of other nations. Free Trade, he maintained, was the cause of much of this decay; and if his tariff proposals were adopted, not only would the decay be arrested, but there would be such an increase in revenue as would make it possible for the Government to embark upon a big new programme of social reform.

To this proposal, so confidently advanced by Chamberlain, the answer of the Liberal leaders was an emphatic negative. They believed that Free Trade was economically sound, and Protection both economically unsound and politically injurious; and there they let the matter rest. For Lloyd George, however, it seemed far from enough merely to say no to Chamberlain's plan. He had no patience with the view, which seemed to be held by as many Liberals as Conservatives, that things were very well as they were. On the contrary, he fully agreed with Chamberlain that things were very bad, and that a programme of drastic social

reform was long overdue. On fundamentals he was perhaps closer to Chamberlain than he was to Campbell-Bannerman, Asquith, Rosebery, and the many other rich or aristocratic men who officially espoused the Liberal creed. Where he disagreed with Chamberlain was in his diagnosis of the disease, and consequently in the proposed remedy. Chamberlain laid the blame on Free Trade; while Lloyd George laid it at the door of social inequalities and evil monopolies—the land system, the whole Whig theory of private property, the gross disparities in wealth, and the multifarious injustices which the poor man was suffering from. He had no patience whatever with the kind of doctrinaire Liberalism which would lead a man to oppose Factory Acts, and to defend economic and social abuses, in the name of the liberty of the individual. His reply to Chamberlain, consequently, was not a flourishing of ancient reforms brought out of the Party museum, but a new programme of social reform. The working man, he argued, was tired of the old theoretical debates and threadbare principles. He cared little for Disestablishment, or Home Rule, or Reform of the House of Lords. What he wanted was a policy calculated to give him a fuller life—higher wages, protection against unemployment and ill health, better housing, equal opportunities for his children with those of the rich, adequate leisure, and the means of culture for himself. Chamberlain was now offering the people bread and circuses—bread in the form of tariffs, and circuses in the form of Imperial expansion. Lloyd George believed that the Liberals also ought to provide bread and circuses; but their bread would be obtained by breaking down the monopoly of landlords, and the circuses would consist in the enhanced dignity of the working man. It is palpably unfair to dub either Chamberlain's scheme, or the ~~new~~ <sup>civil</sup> plan of Lloyd George, sordid materialism: both



were compounds (as, surely, every political programme ought to be?) of the material and the ideal.

The split created in the Tory Party by the Tariff Reform proposals was open to the light of day : but an equally real split created in the Liberal Party by Lloyd George's new policy was hardly perceived at the time ; and, in fact, did not become apparent until five years later. The cleavage, however, was there, cutting across the two parties, and confusing the frontier line between them. In the days after 1918, this cleavage became the dominant factor in Party politics ; for it meant that the old orthodox Liberals found it easy to make common cause with a greatly liberalised Conservative Party ; while the Liberals who had drunk deep of the Lloyd George doctrine found it just as easy to co-operate with Labour. For nine years Lloyd George was destined to be one of the most influential members of a wholly Liberal Cabinet ; but in fact he ceased to be a real Party man (granting that he had ever been one !) some time about 1904, when he first realised that there were a great many Liberals, some of them in the highest positions, who had no serious intention of tackling our unjust social system in the ruthless manner in which he would like to have it attacked. Asquith, as he dogged Chamberlain's footsteps from platform to platform throughout 1904, with unerring skill, and inexhaustible economic knowledge, pricking the Tariff Reform bubbles, was a more able exponent of Free Trade than was Lloyd George, whose grasp of economic principles was never conspicuously great. But the Asquith case was a barren negative, to which the retort of the people might well have been : " Your argument is cogent. Nevertheless, poverty and squalor are here ; and we are going to give this new thing at least a chance, especially as you do not seem to have any promising alternative to offer." It was left to Lloyd George, with

his superb political imagination, and his perfect sympathy with the under-dog, to formulate and proclaim a positive policy which could beat Protection out of the field. "As long", he declared in a speech soon after the unfurling by Chamberlain of the Protectionist banner, "as we have millions who do not get their fair share of things of which there is such an abundance in the land, things are not well. You can't feed the hungry with statistics of national prosperity, or stop the pangs of famine by reciting to a man the prodigious number of cheques that pass through the clearing-house. We must, therefore, propose something better than Mr. Chamberlain." These words were aimed much less at Chamberlain than at his own fellow-Liberals, who looked with too complacent an eye on the existing order of society. Again and again he returned to the attack; insisting that unemployment, low wages, long hours of work, and all the other evils upon which Chamberlain was basing his demand for tariffs, were the consequence of defects in the social, rather than in the economic, system of our country.

Lloyd George was fierce in his denunciation of Chamberlain; for he maintained that the new fiscal proposals would only bring benefits to the rich; and that their author had proved himself a double-dyed traitor to the cause of the working classes. The lightning of his wit and satire, mixed with the thunder of his denunciations, still played about the devoted head of the Member for West Birmingham. "There were very fine specimens of the British workman on Mr. Chamberlain's platform," he exclaimed, in reference to a meeting recently held at Glasgow; "there were three dukes, two marquises, three or four earls, and as many lords as there are Ministerial resignations. They had gone to help the workman to tax his own bread. They know perfectly well what it all means. The Corn Laws

meant high rents in past times ; and so, when a statesman of Mr. Chamberlain's position comes forward and proposes to return to the old Corn Law days, lords and dukes, earls and squires, are to be seen running and clucking towards him like a flock of fowls when they hear the corn shaken in the bin." Attacking Chamberlain in the House of Commons, for allowing a Private Member's Bill giving old age pensions to die at birth, Lloyd George taunted him with having sold his convictions : " The Right Honourable Gentleman", he declared, " has seen the beauties of the illimitable veldt, and he has forgotten all about temperance, finance, education, and old age pensions. These insignificant things are not to be put in the same category as the illimitable veldt. He has rounded the circle on old age pensions, as he has on other topics. In 1894 the Right Honourable Gentleman said that the deserving poor were impatient for this reform. Have the poor become less impatient ? Or is it that they are less poor or less deserving ? ' What ! ' says the Right Honourable Gentleman, ' deserving poor ; are you clamouring for your pensions still ? Turn your thoughts from these worldly, insignificant affairs, and contemplate the illimitable veldt.' " Chamberlain was always impervious to invective and denunciation, however savage ; but to satire and ridicule he was exceptionally sensitive ; and that is why Lloyd George was so frequently able to wound him in a way in which no other man in the House ever succeeded in doing.

It was very tempting for the Liberal Party to rely upon the inherent conservatism of the English people to defeat Chamberlain's fiscal proposals. The " Hungry Forties " were still a haunting memory in this country ; and the Free Trade which had opened a door from them into a world of relative plenty was regarded almost as sacred and

irrefragable as the Constitution itself. But Lloyd George was determined that, so far as he was able to prevent it, Liberal victory should not come to rest upon the demerits of Conservatives. Consequently he allowed no opportunity to be lost for putting in a word for his own alternative social policy. In referring to that policy he was often explicit enough; and it is possible to deduce from the speeches of that period all the proposals which underlie the more famous orations of the Budget campaign. "I am all for encouraging home production," he declared in one of these speeches, "but I will tell you how I would do it. I would have better land laws in this country. I would give security of tenure and fair rent, so that the people might put all they could into the land with confidence. I would have cheaper transit, for it should not cost as much, or more, to carry goods from one part of the United Kingdom to the other as it costs to transport them across the ocean from New York. Above all, I would have a fuller, freer, and better education—it means everything for the people. That is where Germany is beating us, if she is beating us at all. What we want is to improve the quality of the brains of the people, and send them into life, not with the blunt weapon of unhammered iron, but with the fine weapon of tempered steel. No poor man can afford to be ignorant—leave that to the rich." Again a few days later he returns to the same subject: "There is abundant wealth in this country, and by its side there is hideous poverty. If the Cabinet want an inquiry, let them inquire into that. Mr. Chamberlain, I also am a Protectionist. I avow myself a man who believes in protecting industry. Yes, I would protect people—not from honest labour dread—I would protect the agricultural industry from the extortion that confiscates its improvements. I would protect the education of the sons and daughters of the people from the black

sceptre of the priest. I would protect labour from the unconscionable tyranny and oppression of men of the type of Lord Penrhyn. And above all, I would protect industry from that terrible evil which is worse here than in any land, that ill which is enfeebling the health, the strength, the intelligence, which oppresses the people in their effort not merely in the struggle with foreign foes, but in that nobler struggle to rise up to a healthiness, a purer, and a nobler zone of life." The task of Liberalism, he argued, was to grapple with the problem of poverty. Seven per cent of our urban population lived in a state of chronic destitution. Thirty per cent lived on, or below, the poverty line. What was the remedy? On the one hand national expenditure on unproductive things like armaments and colonial wars must be curtailed. But that would not be enough. It would be necessary for us to attack the trusts and monopolies which were interfering with national development, crushing industry, and pressing heavily upon vast numbers of people. Among these trusts "the great Land Trust" was the worst. Busy citizens, working for many generations, erected a wealthy city on a worthless swamp: and the ground landlord reaped the reward. Every year the value of land in London was increasing by the capital sum of £10,000,000. Not one penny had the landlords contributed towards this sum; yet it all poured into their coffers. These gentlemen must be compelled to contribute their fair share. Land values ought to be taxed; and that not merely for the purpose of revenue, but as a powerful lever to obtain housing reform. Better housing was, he argued, one of the most urgent of national needs; and until it had been secured, we should never have a sound, healthy race. The biggest obstacle in the way of all housing schemes was the prohibitive price demanded by landlords for even waste land. Then, too,

the plight of the agricultural labourer was a crying scandal; working as he did, all the year round, for a wage of eleven shillings a week. Finally, as an instance of oppressive monopolies, there were the mining royalties; out of which some of the biggest fortunes in the country had been made by people whose sole contribution was the granting of permission to other men to labour. "Next time the progressive forces of this country are once more triumphant," he exclaimed, "their first task will be to teach their civil duties to these people." There was not much evidence, in the years following the overwhelming Liberal triumph of 1906, that the Liberal Government agreed with Lloyd George on this point; for the task to which it set itself was the carrying of the old stock-in-trade measures—Licensing Bill, Education Bill, and all the rest of it. The truth is, that Lloyd George, despite his immense popularity with the rank and file, was not of sufficient weight in the councils of his Party, between 1904 and 1909, to be able to impose his will, in matters of first-class importance, upon hesitating and lukewarm colleagues. And with the possible exception of Edward Grey, none of his colleagues had a consuming zeal for social reform. At a thorough social revolution, one which would result in giving the poor man all the advantages possessed by the rich, Campbell-Bannerman and Asquith looked with just as cold an eye as Balfour or Walter Long. There was, moreover, still a lingering feeling (not altogether without foundation) that Lloyd George was an untried man. Of his oratorical powers, and his dexterity in debate, there could be no two opinions; but some suspicion was felt that—to quote the phrase of a hostile Welsh newspaper—all his brains were in his tongue. It required the three years of solid and most successful work at the Board of Trade, and of wise counsel in the Cabinet room, to convince his

colleagues that he was a man whose lead in important matters they could safely follow.

Although it is obvious that Lloyd George was now coming to be more interested in the condition of the working classes than in anything else, and regarded the fiscal controversy primarily as an opportunity for advertising his own counter-remedy of taxing the pampered rich, he did believe whole-heartedly in Free Trade; and his speeches, if lacking the full weight of Asquith's classic expositions of the theme, were always vivid and cogent. Two interesting arguments were frequently employed by him over and above those common to all Free Trade orators, viz. the position of our shipping, and the connection between Free Trade and international relations. It was due to Free Trade, he argued, that the British mercantile marine had become the first in the world; that our ships sailed on every sea, and visited every port, bringing back to our shores the choicest produce of every country under the sun. To restrict our foreign trade would inevitably deal a blow which might easily prove mortal, at this, one of the two or three greatest, of British industries. It was a wise and far-seeing argument; for had Britain not possessed her immense superiority in merchant ships, the German submarines would inevitably have won the Great War. Equally weighty in his eyes was the argument that Free Trade helped to promote friendly relationships between nations; while tariffs, quotas, and every sort of artificial restriction upon trade only produced the kind of international atmosphere in which the seeds of political rivalry rapidly grew into war-creating causes. This was Cobden's favourite argument, and in the conditions which prevailed down to 1914 it was well justified. "Argument has failed", he cried, "to break down this mad competition in armaments. We cannot get these men to meet at the same

altar; and the world is divided into its Protestants, its Roman Catholics, its Greek Church, its Mahomedans, its Buddhists, and its followers of Confucius. There is one thing that will help. Get them to meet in the market place. They may come to the same mart; and men who have met each other in honest trade respect and honour each other. It is the next approach to friendship. With an open door to the trade of the world, we shall gradually help to break down the terrible system which is crushing industry in Europe. I am a hopeful man, and I feel that the time will come when, in spite of armaments, the swords will be beaten into ploughshares, and the spears into pruning-hooks, and there will be no more war. When that time comes, the name of Britain will be blessed as the country which, in spite of all the inducements of false statesmen, stood up against the world for a free mart for all." The optimism of these words, spoken by Lloyd George thirty-four years ago, makes us smile ruefully to-day; but there is this much of truth in them: the more dynamic nations of the world acquiesced with a tolerably fair grace in the possession by England of a quarter of the earth's surface, simply because the trade of her territories was open on equal terms to the people of every country, the Imperial owner of this far-flung domain seeking no advantage for herself beyond what she could win in fair and open competition. Free Trade did not prove enough to safeguard peace; but the repudiation of Free Trade, when it did take place long years after, did unquestionably lead to jealousy and hostility.

Chamberlain's fiscal policy was, as we see it in retrospect, the most important topic under discussion in those two concluding years—1903-1905—of the Balfour Administration. But there were other matters which roused a good deal of party feeling at the time. One of these—the



Education Act—has already been dealt with. Government policy, Lloyd George believed, was based on a triple alliance of parson, publican, and corruption. The parson had received his reward in the form of the Education Act. For the benefit of the publican, a Licensing Bill was designed. The bribe offered to the manufacturer was Protection. "The Government", declared Lloyd George, "goes to the priest and says: 'Support us, we are tottering, and we will give into your charge, fettered, the children of the land.' It goes to the brewer and says: 'Help us, and we will bring in a Bill which will prevent even magisterial justice from interfering with the tragic working of your trade.' It goes to the trader and says: 'You need not depend upon the quality of your wares, your commercial intelligence or the excellence of your business management, if you will assist us, because we will help you to make profit out of the poor of the land.'"

The Licensing Bill of 1904 had its origin in the judgment of the country in the case of *Sharpe v. Wakefield*. An assumption had been growing that a publican, if his licence happened to be withdrawn for any reason other than bad conduct, was entitled to compensation. The courts now, however, declared that no such right was known to our law; and many magisterial benches up and down the country were profiting by this greater freedom allowed them to suppress redundant public-houses. Balfour's measure laid it down that, in future, if an existing licence were withdrawn, simply on the ground that it was unnecessary, the holder would be entitled to compensation. There was to be a small tax on licences then existing, and a special payment in respect of new licences issued, for the purpose of creating a compensation fund. All Lloyd George's temperance zeal burst into flame at the contemplation of this iniquitous proposal. Here were our magistrates, not

on the whole suffering from any bias in favour of teetotalism, yet realising at last the evils of the drink traffic, and using their legal power to curb it; and the Government going out of its way to check their zeal by converting a permit to sell liquor into a species of private property! On this issue Lloyd George had the solid support of the Liberal Party; for friendship with "The Trade" was, in those days, regarded as the peculiar badge of Toryism. Liberal candidates all over the country knew to their cost the immense influence which the publicans wielded in the constituencies, and it was almost invariably exerted on behalf of the Conservatives. Nonconformists, who formed so important a section of the Liberal Party, were, it goes without saying, to a man against the Bill.

The only other question of importance occupying the attention of Ministers during that period was the position of affairs in South Africa. Chamberlain had relinquished the position which he had rendered so famous; and the Colonial Secretary was now Alfred Lyttelton. Quite one of the most popular members in the House, Lyttelton cut but a poor figure at the Colonial Office; for he was a mere puppet in the hands of Milner, whose ideas of conciliation, and of working out a satisfactory system of co-operation between Boer and Briton were as crude and impossible as ever. The last straw was the introduction into South Africa of indentured labourers from China. Chamberlain had been opposed to this policy, but he chivalrously defended Lyttelton when it was adopted, "nailing", in Lloyd George's witty phrase, "the yellow flag to the mast of Protection".

The Boers were bitterly hostile to this Chinese labour; for they knew that there were racial difficulties enough in the country already, without deliberately importing an additional one. Lloyd George opposed it on three grounds:

first, because it was an affront to the Boers; secondly, because it was inhuman; thirdly, because it was prompted by a fear of white trade unionism, and a desire to obtain cheap labour in order that wealthy capitalists might be still further enriched. This "Chinese Slavery" came to be a leading topic at the next General Election. No doubt denunciation of it was overdone on the part of many Liberal candidates in their eagerness to drive a particularly deadly nail into the Government's coffin. But when all due allowance for electioneering exaggeration has been made, the policy of Chinese labour still stands out clearly as bad policy, and bad morals. In serene old age, when every particle of Party bitterness had disappeared from his mind, Augustine Birrell commented on it in these words: "The importation of cheap Chinese indentured labour into the gold and diamond fields of South Africa was an evil thing. As for the alleged inexactitude of the phrase 'Chinese Slavery', I could never see what was wrong with it."

The end of the Government came sooner, and more suddenly, than had been anticipated. In the early autumn of 1905 it looked as if Balfour had every intention of carrying on until the extreme limit of Parliament's life had been reached. It is true that his Party was split in two over the fiscal question ("Like a worm when it is cut, both ends wriggle," was Lloyd George's comment); but Balfour's policy, successful so far, was to play for time, hoping that some basis of compromise would ere long be discovered. Two things, however, caused a change of tactics. The first was the outbreak of dissension once again among the Liberal leaders. As the virtual certainty of having soon to form a Government came to be realised more clearly by Liberals, the question of leadership assumed a graver complexion. Apparently there were still some

prominent members of the Party who hankered after Lord Rosebery, notwithstanding the fact that Campbell-Bannerman was obviously the choice, both of the rank and file and of King Edward. His Majesty had gone out of his way at Marienbad to tell Campbell-Bannerman that, when Balfour resigned, he would at once send for him. But the allocation of the leading posts in the Government was still an open question; and much depended, or at least seemed to depend, upon whether the little group of Liberal Imperialists would succeed in capturing such key positions as the Leadership of the Commons, the Chancellorship of the Exchequer, and the Foreign Office. On November 23rd, Campbell-Bannerman delivered a speech at Stirling, in which, after previous discussion and agreement with Asquith, Grey, and Haldane, he committed the Liberal Party to the policy of Irish Home Rule, but Home Rule by stages. Whereupon Rosebery, speaking two days later at Bodmin, went out of his way to repudiate Home Rule altogether, and declared emphatically that he "could not serve under that banner". Rosebery when he spoke had not known that an agreement on the matter had been arrived at by Campbell-Bannerman and the three Liberal Imperialists; and he felt that the latter had let him down badly. Grey did his best to paper over the alarming cracks which had suddenly appeared in the wall of Liberal Imperialism; but Rosebery's declaration had been too emphatic to be explained away; and by it he had excluded himself from the future Cabinet. Ultimately the only schismatic turned out to be Rosebery himself; and he forthwith retired to the congenial atmosphere of the cross-benches. But at the moment high hopes were entertained by Conservatives that a real split in the Liberal ranks was impending; and that they would go to the country consequently crippled.

This was the end of the Liberal League. It had died of inanition. But although its place was to know it no more, it nevertheless left an evil legacy behind it in the Liberal Party. Henceforward, the private Liberal member always had his suspicions of Grey and Haldane; nor did even Asquith altogether escape. The consequence was that the three Imperialists tended, in all matters appertaining to foreign policy, to form a little clique, guarding its secrets rather jealously, and getting definitely out of touch with the main stream of Liberal opinion. Ultimately, the consequences might have proved disastrous; in fact, nothing less than a serious cleavage of opinion in the Liberal ranks with regard to the policy to be pursued in the face of Germany's challenge in 1914. Such a cleavage was only averted by Germany's fatal blunder in violating Belgium.

Hope of civil war within the ranks of Liberalism was not the only argument which weighed with Balfour, inducing him to tender his resignation: he himself was being disagreeably pressed by Chamberlain and the out-and-out Protectionists. They were, in fact, tired of his equivocal leadership; and felt that the conversion of the rank and file of the party to the Birmingham policy had gone far enough to warrant its being imposed upon the dissentient minority. Balfour was anxious to remain on the fence; but regardless of his express desire, a resolution calling for the whole undiluted Chamberlain policy was carried at the meeting of the National Union of Conservative Associations, at Newcastle, on November 14th! Five days later, Chamberlain himself, in defiance of his chief, at a meeting of the Liberal Unionist Council, protested vehemently against making further concessions to the Free Trade minority; and compared the Unionist Party to an army which was being led into battle on the principle that the lamest man should set its pace. Such open rebellion could

not be overlooked by even so easy-going a man as Balfour; and he at once tendered his resignation to the King. There was a majority of Liberals who contended that Campbell-Bannerman ought to refuse to accept office until after the General Election. The Government, it was argued, ought to remain in power until defeated in the House. There would be a decided tactical advantage in compelling this discredited Cabinet to go to the country as a Government; for then it would be confronted with the immense volume of contempt and hatred which it had accumulated against itself. But Campbell-Bannerman did not agree with this view of things. A plain, straightforward man, hating nothing more than tactics, he decided that it was his duty to accept the royal command. He kissed hands as First Lord of the Treasury on December 4th, 1905, and, without delay, set to work to form his Administration.

Throughout these fateful weeks Lloyd George had been in Italy, resting in the lovely surroundings of Rapallo after a particularly heavy programme of speech-making in Parliament and country. He had not expected the Tory Government to resign until compelled to do so; and he had put that opinion in the form of the epigram that Ministers would die with their drawn salaries in their hands! So greatly did he enjoy Rapallo, and the leisure which it afforded him, that when his brother, who had been his travelling companion, had to return to Wales, Lloyd George decided to prolong his stay. But when Mr. William George reached home on December 2nd, he learnt the critical state of the political situation, and at once telegraphed to his brother, bidding him return without delay. Lloyd George at once set out; and twenty-four hours later, he too was in London. How little suspicion ~~he had~~ that another week would see him made a Cabinet

Minister is proved by a letter which he wrote from Rapallo to a friend on November 27th : " The pens are so bad here ", he wrote, " that I am doubtful whether I can indulge my propensity for letter-writing to any extent in this epistle. I simply want to tell you that I had fully hoped to comply this year with your request that I should address a meeting at Barmouth, but my unfortunate illness has dislocated all my plans. I cannot return to Britain until the third week in December. I have already had to postpone all meetings in my constituency. Those I must take up at once, owing to the apparent proximity of the General Election. Very sorry, as I had a few things I wished specially to tell the Nonconformists of Merionethshire. William returns to-morrow by train. I stay another week, and then return by sea." Like all his letters of those years, it is written with his own hand ; and he who reads them to-day is forced to the conclusion that the Hôtel Verdi at Rapallo was not the only one among his haunts in which the pens were " very bad " !

## CHAPTER NINE

### THE BOARD OF TRADE [1905-1907]

ABOUT the difficulties of making a Liberal Cabinet in 1905, enough, and more than enough, has already been written by historians and biographers. The problem was, how to maintain an even balance between Imperialists and anti-Imperialists. Who was to have the big positions? Haldane used to maintain that, if the Cabinet had been constituted after the General Election, he and Grey would have been left out altogether. But in December, 1905, who could tell with certainty what the verdict of the electorate would be? Campbell-Bannerman, at all events, decided that no risks must be run, and that every Liberal must be won for the Party. The process of bargaining which went on behind the scenes concerns a biographer of Lloyd George but little; for unlike the squire of Falloden, he did not consider himself to be a person of sufficient importance to be able to impose terms upon the new Prime Minister. Although there was no great difference of age between them, it must be remembered that the one had come from Falloden, Winchester, and Oxford, the other from the Llanystumdwy "Highgate", a village school, and a small solicitor's office; and in those days, no matter what the abilities respectively possessed, it took a long time for the cottage to overtake the mansion. The period was only just drawing to a close, when a young man of middling intellectual



gifts, with average powers of speech, and backed by great territorial interest, not only got into the House of Commons as a matter of course, but also into the Cabinet. As to that matter the practice had been the same in both the great political parties; and Gladstone was no whit more democratic than Salisbury. A feeling that he is "not quite one of us" still dogged the footsteps of a Parliamentarian, however brilliant, who was neither an aristocrat by birth, nor the product of a public school and the old universities. Chamberlain, by the tremendous power of his personality, had broken through the ring fence; but even he had been obliged to don the respectable garments of Conservatism, and to abjure all the heresies of his Radical past before he was considered quite fit to enter the inner circle in which dukes and baronets were firmly established, dispensing Under-Secretaryships to their nephews. Lloyd George was now forty-two; and he had fifteen most brilliant years of Parliamentary service to his credit. Yet it was still thought in many quarters a little wonderful that he should sit in a Cabinet; and even the sympathetic Campbell-Bannerman did not see fit to accord him one of the biggest prizes. Those were still to go to the aristocratically born, or the aristocratically educated, even when the political abilities of the recipients were obviously not in the least above the level of mediocrity. Of Campbell-Bannerman's Government, however, it is true to say that it contained far less of the aristocratic element than any of its predecessors. There were noble lords in it, of necessity—Crewe, Ripon, Elgin, Tweedmouth, Carrington—not all of them able men. But over against this deference to tradition could be set a number of largely, if not wholly, self-made men—Asquith, Morley, Birrell, Bryce, John Burns, and Lloyd George. But all of them, with the exception of Burns and Lloyd George, were the

sons of at least comparatively well-to-do homes, and had received a university education.

It is no secret that Lloyd George himself had hoped to be offered the Home Office. He felt that his position in the Party, as the most important representative of the Non-conformist interest, entitled him to one of the principal Secretaryships of State. That his thoughts should have dwelt longingly about the most humdrum and least spectacular of Cabinet offices seems strange; and it is interesting, though hardly profitable, to speculate as to what he would have made of it. The Colonial Office had, for many years, been regarded in much the same light as the Home Office: but when Chamberlain became its head, he soon converted it into the chief storm centre of politics. Lloyd George, like Chamberlain, has always possessed the ability to make whatever office he happens to hold at the moment the hub of the political universe. In his keeping it may fairly be presumed that the Home Office, for the only time in its history, would have become dynamic! There were, of course, other reasons, besides his lack of birth and education, why Campbell-Bannerman should refuse to promote him at once to the highest Cabinet rank. Those were days in which seniority did count for a good deal in Parliamentary circles; and it would hardly have been consistent with the practice of the times to allow a man to leap over the subordinate positions. For after all, Lloyd George had never been an Under-Secretary, or had any sort of official experience. He was no more famous than Chamberlain had been when Gladstone admitted him to the Cabinet, also as President of the Board of Trade. Then, too, it must be admitted that there existed, even among those who really liked and appreciated him, a feeling that Lloyd George was a little too ready with his tongue, a little too irresponsible, a little too fond of the

dramatic and the artistic ; and it may well have seemed to the Prime Minister, who had always been his sincere well-wisher, that a few years in the sober atmosphere of the Post Office, or the Board of Trade, would be highly beneficial to him. Its affairs, generally dull, and almost always far removed from Party passions, would be a salutary discipline.

When given the choice of the two offices—Board of Trade or Post Office—Lloyd George without hesitation chose the former, despite the fact that its salary was £500 a year less, and that he, at the time, was poorer than he had been for many years, owing to the shrinking of his legal practice as the result of the unpopularity of his Pro-Boer activities. What disappointment he may have felt at not being given anything better never revealed itself : he had the good sense to see that the attainment of Cabinet rank, even on the lowest rung of the ladder, was a supreme honour in the circumstances ; and for a man who had begun life where he did, a signal personal triumph. That he was immensely pleased was the impression which he gave to all his friends at the time. And, needless to say, the old uncle down at Criccieth, who had sacrificed so much over forty years for this beloved nephew, was elated, and almost prepared to pronounce a thankful *Nunc dimittis*. Nor was the joy in the Caernarvon Boroughs any less. For had not their faith in the poor boy whom they had chosen, fifteen years before, to represent them in Parliament, been abundantly vindicated ? It was no ordinary relationship of Member and constituents that subsisted between them, but a warm affection, tinged with admiration on their part, and with gratitude on his. Filled with the old zeal, and now animated by a great pride in their Member, the Liberals of Caernarvon Boroughs faced the General Election in high heart.

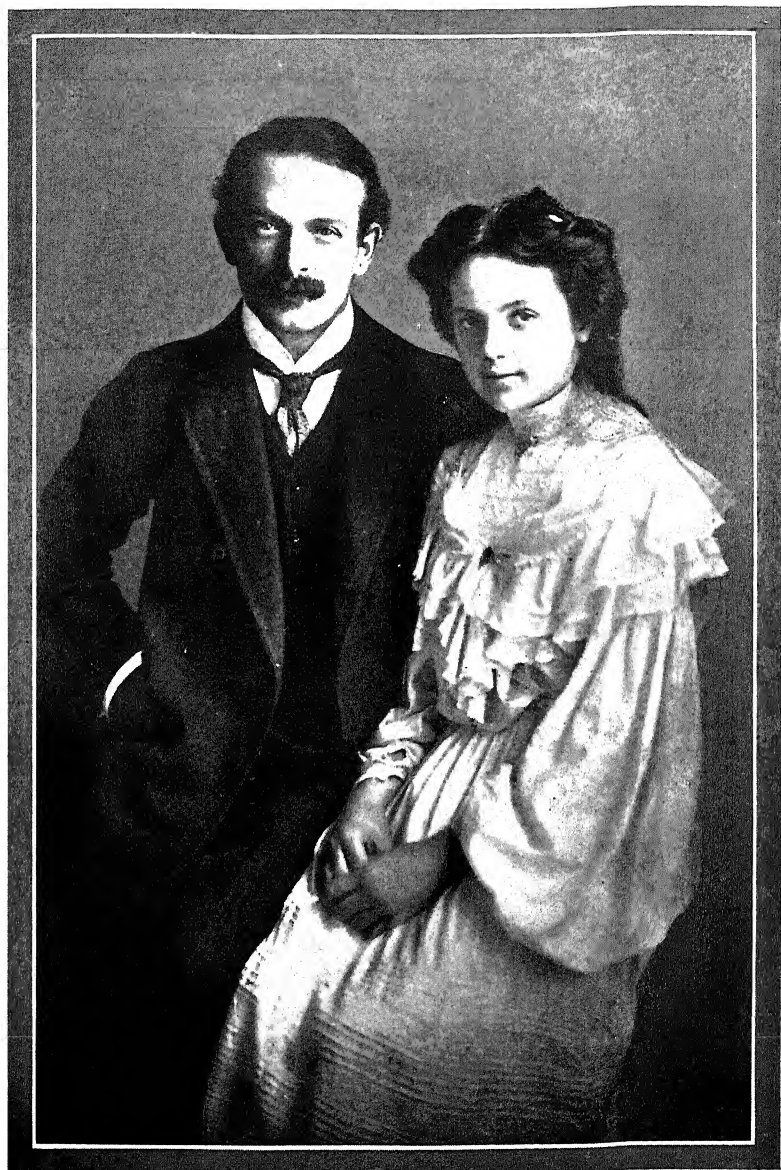
The Conservative candidate chosen to do battle with the

new Cabinet Minister was a Mr. R. A. Naylor—a generous and amiable gentleman, who had made a fortune in the timber trade, and had employed his leisure in composing and publishing a volume of hymns. He knew no Welsh, neither had he any Welsh associations. The extent of his knowledge of politics it was difficult to ascertain; for so uproarious were all his meetings in the constituency that his speeches were never heard. Of all the elections that Lloyd George has fought this is the one which came nearest to being pure farce. That Lloyd George himself realised that this time it was to be a sham battle is proved by the fact that he devoted at least one-half of the weeks allotted to electioneering to speaking for friends in other constituencies all over England and Wales. The rest of the time was conscientiously devoted to the Caernarvon Boroughs, in each one of which he spoke at least twice. In addition to speaking at meetings, he spent much time in going about among the people, hundreds, if not thousands, of whom he knew by name. Nor did he disdain the assistance of other prominent Welsh Members of Parliament; and the fiery eloquence of William Jones, the caustic wit of Ellis Griffith, and the rich culture of Llewelyn Williams were all to be found on his platforms. At the previous election his majority had been 296; this time it rose to 1,224. Huge crowds assembled in each of the boroughs to hear the result, and scenes of the wildest enthusiasm prevailed. There was nothing really surprising about the size of the majority: the Liberal tide was flowing strongly everywhere; and Caernarvonshire felt that it had been honoured by having its Member put into the Cabinet. Even prominent local Conservatives, especially if they were Welshmen, shared this feeling of pride; and their efforts, in consequence, on behalf of their own candidate had been markedly lukewarm. Lloyd George was, in fact, well on the way

towards becoming a Welsh institution; regarded with indulgence by even the strongest of his political opponents in Wales. At the General Election of 1906 not a single Conservative was returned by Wales.

Criccieth and the vicinity saw a good deal of Lloyd George during the three years that he was at the Board of Trade. He still lived in the semi-detached villa on the Portmadoc Road, though plans for the building of Brynawelon, on its incomparable site, were being discussed. Save for a short trip abroad now and again, the whole of his time when Parliament was not sitting was usually spent at Criccieth. He had not yet ceased to be in very truth a citizen of the little Welsh township. When there, he did not surround himself with his new friends from London, but was satisfied with the friends of his early days—the local ironmonger, the local draper, and the many others who, beginning life where he had begun his, had remained in their old social positions. It is a fair region in which to dwell: there is, perhaps, in all Britain, none fairer. And Lloyd George delighted in its beauty of sea, valley, and mountain. Almost every day the President of the Board of Trade was to be seen striding rapidly along the upland lanes behind the town, or along the cliffs in the direction of his beloved river Dwyfor. He was always a mighty walker; but in 1906 two other hobbies were beginning to win his heart—golf and motoring. Several years earlier he had been initiated into the mysteries of the royal and ancient game; and down to the end of the Great War he remained a keen, though never a particularly successful, golfer. In 1906 a fine sporting links had been laid down at Criccieth; and Lloyd George at once became one of its most loyal patrons. There he would play with Criccieth townsmen, sometimes delighting all parties concerned by arranging foursomes in which he and the local draper would oppose Rufus Isaacs

or Winston Churchill and the local ironmonger. The social democracy which was one of the finest features of the pure Welsh township of thirty years ago did not find Lloyd George unfaithful to it when his political position of necessity led him into circles where very different fashions prevailed. It may be doubted whether, at any other time before or since, Lloyd George was quite so happy as in that year 1906. His family of five children were growing up around him. The home life was an exceptionally pleasant one. Old Richard Lloyd was there to cheer, and to give his invaluable advice in all matters, from the colour of a tie to the propriety of inserting a clause in a Bill. There was the satisfaction of a goal, originally immeasurably distant, now arrived at. Above all, perhaps, was the satisfaction of knowing that he had made for himself, in Wales, a position unequalled since Owen Glyndwr, and of feeling that his people adored him with a feeling similar to that with which an eighteenth-century Highland clan regarded its chief. Basking thus in the smiles of fortune, all that was best in Lloyd George's nature came out. The bitterness, the suspicion, the narrowness, disappeared; and he became altogether genial, tolerant, generous to foe as well as friend, and broad-minded. His pugnacity did not diminish; but now biting sarcasm gave place to humour; and seldom did he employ even his wit to wound. Thus it was that he became popular with friends and foes alike, for however heated the debates in which he played a leading part, it was hardly ever that he inflicted a rankling sore. The Lloyd George of the 1890's could not fight Chamberlain without dealing the kind of blows which make friendship impossible; but the Lloyd George of the years after 1906 was able to fight Chamberlain's son, as well as Tory champions like Balfour, Bonar Law, and F. E. Smith, without the slightest



injury to the terms of mutual respect, and even cordiality, prevailing between them. The truth is that, for a brief period after his accession to office at the end of 1905, Lloyd George was in perfect tune with his surroundings; and was enjoying the reward of the man who has won new, and immensely valuable, rewards without sacrificing in the least degree his ancient friends and loyalties. None of the roots which connected him with the companions and causes of his own romantic youth had been severed; and there was consequently not a trace of spiritual loneliness to cause unhappiness. The writer of this book was a young schoolboy in those days; but a fleeting glimpse of that radiant happiness created an indelible impression upon his memory. He was strolling, on a sunny April morning, down the lane which leads from the Criccieth golf links, past the cemetery and the parish church, to the village. Midway he met Lloyd George, attired in a tweed suit, and wearing a broad-brimmed white felt hat, his dark hair falling in waves well over his coat collar, and arm-in-arm with him, his eldest daughter, Mair, then in all the fresh loveliness of her sixteen years. A brief stop, a few kindly words, and the smile which has won so many hearts—that was all; but the impression of complete, nay, exuberant, felicity has remained graven to this day.

Much political work had not prevented Lloyd George from indulging his love of reading; and his conversation at that time was bookish enough to delight the soul of a professor. History and biography were still his favourite subjects, with travel coming in third, and fiction last. Carlyle had exercised over him, as he had over so many thoughtful and serious-minded men of the period, a very great influence; and Lloyd George has always been eager to acknowledge his debt to the great prophet, although it was only in small measure that he accepted the main



thesis of the Carlylean gospel. Gibbon was still a prime favourite. Nor is it surprising to find that Victor Hugo was read with great appreciation. The fiery Frenchman's love of freedom, his hatred of every sort of tyranny, and his genuine and passionate sympathy with the victims of poverty and injustice, not to speak of his rousing eloquence and memorable phrases, found a ready echo in the mind of the Welsh Liberal. Less easy, perhaps, is it to understand why he should have admired George Meredith. Of poetry one heard less from him; for he was always a man of action, caring little for delicate psychological analysis, and despising the introspection which tends to sap the strong man's vitality. The only kind of verse for which he cared was the rushing ballad, with its swift riding, its clash of armour, its songs of victory, and its laments for the heroic dead. For that reason he never quoted Wordsworth, though himself an intense lover of nature. And a writer has recalled that his comment on Christina Rossetti was: "Yes, sweet meditative verse; beautiful for occasional use. It is like a shelter on the mountainside when you are caught in a storm. You are grateful for it, but you can't stay in it long. You must get out into the free air and the wind, and even the hail." For, book lover though he was, Lloyd George had far too restless a disposition to make it possible for him to relish the writers whose minds dwelt so much in retreat, away from the busy haunts of man. You could never imagine him (as his colleague, John Morley, so often used to do) burying himself for whole days in a great library, and producing that glorious chapter in the *Recollections* which is called "An Easter Digression". Still less easily can we picture him living with his other colleague—Edward Grey—dividing the hours between the perusal of *The Prelude* and the watching of waterfowl in the ponds of Falloden. Books, in fact,

never had first place with him: they were read, partly for instruction, partly for recreation, but never, one is inclined to think, in order to build out of them an ideal world. Even when reading his favourite historians—Gibbon, Macaulay, Ferrero—the real interest for him lay in the likeness which he could trace between the characters, the words, and deeds described by them, and the characters and political episodes of his own day. This Roman statesman would remind him of Chamberlain, that famous Greek of Balfour, Macaulay's brilliant summaries of the debates under King William of great encounters at Westminster in which he had listened to Gladstone's tremendous eloquence. The struggle for agrarian reforms in Ancient Rome, or the struggle to win power for the Commons in seventeenth century England, would interest him chiefly for the resemblance which they bore to the struggles against landlords and the House of Lords in which he himself was engaged. That is not the historian's attitude towards his subject. But Lloyd George never professed to be either historian or literary critic; he was always the busy politician, finding refreshment and knowledge in books.

The first Cabinet of which Lloyd George found himself a member was not only a very able set of men politically, but also an exceptionally learned set as well. There was James Bryce, easily the most erudite English historian of the day, and the author of several works, which had already become classics, on history, politics, jurisprudence, and travel. "Bryce", declared Campbell-Bannerman on one occasion, "is a marvellous fellow. He has read everything, been everywhere, and knows everyone." That comprehensive tribute was almost literally true. Then there was John Morley, the author of a score of books—biography, history, literary criticism—a few of which at least are destined to hold a permanent place in literature. Less

weighty, but with a peculiar charm of style which is likely to preserve them long from oblivion, were the works of another member of the Cabinet—the brilliant and witty Augustine Birrell. Haldane—the new Secretary of State for War—was not only a lawyer of the first rank, but also a philosopher of European fame. Asquith had written no books at that time, but his massive learning, ranging over the whole field of ancient and modern literature, was known to all his associates. Campbell-Bannerman was, perhaps, the least “professional” of them all in his knowledge; but it was known that he had a vast acquaintance with English and French imaginative literature, as well as a sound “gentlemanly” knowledge of the Latin classics; for on at least one occasion he was able to correct Asquith in the matter of a classical quotation. Grey, no less than the others, delighted in books; but his range was extremely narrow; and the exquisite art which, in the closing years of his life, he displayed in his own writings about nature, birds, fishing, and Wordsworth’s poetry, had not yet revealed itself. The “men of the people”—Lloyd George and John Burns—who sat in this richly endowed Cabinet, lacked the academic foundation upon which the book-learning of all the others was built; but both had always been omnivorous readers, both owned libraries of which no scholar need have felt ashamed, and—thanks to singularly tenacious memories—both were well able to render a good account of themselves in casual discussions of men, places, and books, past and present.

The new Parliament contained a Liberal majority of 220, not counting the Irish and Labour Members, over the combined forces of the Opposition. As usual there were 83 Irish Members. For the first time in history, however, there was a substantial Labour representation; for their Members totalled 53, of whom 24 were in alliance with

the Government, while 29 constituted an Independent Labour Party. On the Opposition benches Chamberlainites were a great deal more numerous than Balfourites, and still more numerous than Conservative Free Traders ; and thenceforward there was never any doubt that the return of a Tory Government to power would mean Protection. For the first time in twenty years Liberals had effective political power so far as the representative chamber was concerned ; but it was soon to be realised that a Liberal Government with a virtual majority of 356 was in fact far less powerful than a Tory Government with a tenth of that majority. Balfour, irritated no doubt by the castigation which he had received at the polls, cast his usual discretion to the wind, and declared quite plainly from the start that, although his Party had suffered an unprecedented defeat at the hands of the electors, it still possessed a permanent majority in the House of Lords, which would serve to nullify every serious effort of the popular forces to translate their desires into laws. Thus was projected from the very moment of Liberal victory the shadow of a struggle with the Upper House which was, more and more, to become the real preoccupation of the 1906 Parliament ; which was to frustrate all its best endeavours ; and finally to compel it to go to the country on a first-class constitutional issue.

In some respects the immense Liberal majority was a disappointing one. Never before had so large a number of solid, prosperous, and not very daring or imaginative, Nonconformists sat in the House of Commons. Those who were not Nonconformists were mostly successful middle-class men, who had no real quarrel with a social and economic system which had enabled them to thrive so conspicuously. And from the beginning an unmistakable dullness, a lack of bold enterprise, seemed to possess them

all. In the main they had been returned to power as a vote of no confidence in the Balfour Administration, and not because the country was thirsting for progressive legislation. In the field of colonial policy, of education, and of temperance, they were eager to undo what they regarded as the evil works of their predecessors. But for the rest, they deemed it enough to mark time with a good Liberal step, toying with measures like Irish Home Rule, Welsh Disestablishment, and Plural Voting, but putting no particular enthusiasm or determination behind any of them. It was hardly a promising scene for the launching of the bold social policy which Lloyd George had been advocating as an alternative to Tariff Reform; for the prosperous drapers and builders, the successful manufacturers and barristers, who sat in serried rows behind the portly figure of the new Liberal Premier were, if anything, further removed in their sympathies from the poor than were the Tory landlords who had supported Balfour. And Lloyd George, who had always been tremendously sensitive and responsive to his environment, evidently felt their depressing influence; for never was he himself nearer being dull, never more decorous and sweetly reasonable, than during this two-and-a-half years at the Board of Trade. In retrospect we can perceive that the real importance of the period lay in the colonial and foreign field; but those territories were the preserve of the Prime Minister, of Grey, and of Haldane; and Lloyd George seems to have known little of what was happening in them.

The promotion to Cabinet rank of the headstrong Welsh iconoclast was viewed with much misgiving in many quarters; not least among the permanent officials of the Board of Trade, and the many interests dependent upon the good offices of the President. But very soon all their fears were laid at rest. The new President was punctual

and industrious, immensely quick to grasp the complicated details of any question. Moreover (and that surprised them more) he was patient, courteous, considerate, and conciliatory. Outsiders who had business to transact with the department were agreeably surprised to find him so accessible, so polite, so willing to listen to their side of the question, and so ready to accept advice. How difficult it is to "spoil" Lloyd George by any sort of honour and position, we who have seen him pass with hardly a scar through the highest position in the State, know quite well, and we have long learned to take it for granted; but it came as a surprise to people who had bitter experience of the ways of the average "self-made" man, but who did not know Lloyd George, that he showed no symptoms of pride and arrogance when he first took office. "During thirty years," declared an old servant of the House of Commons, "I have only known one member whose manner and way of speaking did not change after he had become a Cabinet Minister. That one is Lloyd George." He has never undervalued himself, nor made pretence to a false modesty; but his entire self-possession, complete absence of affectation, and uniform courtesy to high and low, have preserved him from ever acquiring the sort of stiff pompousness which is far too often the characteristic of the highest servants of the State.

Many of the true friends of the new President had doubted whether he would acquit himself well in a department in which there is so little room for drama, so few opportunities for making eloquent speeches. But they were soon set at ease. A lover of hard work, especially of official drudgery, Lloyd George can never be said to have been, but his powerful will does not fail to bring him up to the required pitch when a difficult and burdensome task has to be handled. He has always craved for new worlds

to conquer; and it was in that spirit that he approached the Board of Trade. It was a challenge to him; and he was determined to prove to friends and foes alike that there did not exist an administrative task which he could not deal with efficiently. He was naturally fond of society; but now he began to live the life of a hermit, repairing early to his office and staying late, and spending all the rest of his time in the House of Commons. His wonderfully quick mind soon grasped all that there was to be known about the routine of the Board, thus leaving him free to devise improvements and reforms. A leading factor in his strength has always been his ability to read the human heart, and to win men over to his own way of looking at things. The country at large has known the persuasive power of Lloyd George's public oratory; but we have the testimony of two such unrivalled witnesses as Mr. Churchill and the first Lord Birkenhead to the fact that his powers of persuasion on the public platform were as nothing to those which he possessed in the private council chamber. And now, for the first time, he began to practise this art of persuading people across the table. His technique consisted in summoning to his presence all the various "interests" concerned in any particular matter or dispute with the object, so far as possible, of securing substantial agreement between the parties before formulating a Bill to be presented to Parliament. To what extent Lloyd George was the inventor of this method it is not easy to discover: certainly no British statesman before his time had used it so freely. Yet its adoption may be regarded as one of the principal factors in the holding together so firmly of our democratic system, when the democratic systems of other countries have crumbled or crashed. For it means, in its essence, that a majority shall not formulate its own pet nostrum in its own way,

entirely regardless of the objections of opponents, and then by sheer force of numbers place it upon the Statute Book. Where things are done in that way, party politics are bound to become so bitter that armed force is almost certain to be the ultimate outcome. The other method means securing all the parties affected or interested in the proposed measure, inviting them to state their view-points, and then, if possible, working out a compromise which they will accept, though they do it reluctantly. Nothing has strengthened the democratic tradition in England more than the refusal on the part of temporary majorities to extract the last ounce of advantage from their position.

It is hardly necessary to deal at much length with the measures which Lloyd George sponsored while at the Board of Trade, and which made him popular with all parties; for except that they indicate his efficiency, his ability to go straight for essentials, his impatience with administrative confusion, his dexterity in handling men and conflicting interests, and his immense driving power, they throw no special light upon his character. In his career, however, they are all-important stepping-stones, inasmuch as they convinced even the doubters that he could be safely entrusted with the charge of an important Government Department. Without these successes to his credit, it is not likely that even the clamour of the more progressive wing of the Party would have persuaded Asquith to promote him to the second place in the Cabinet in 1908.

The first of these measures was the Merchant Shipping Act of 1906. Portmadoc, in the days when Lloyd George was a young law apprentice there, was a busy little port; and from that time on he had always been greatly interested in ships. It will be recalled that the detrimental effect likely to be exercised upon our shipping industry by tariffs was one of his principal reasons for opposing Chamberlain's



proposals. Here was an opportunity of helping this great national industry, and, at the same time, indulging his taste for championing the cause of the oppressed by doing something to ameliorate the hard lot of the sailor. Dr. Johnson, we are told by Boswell, used to maintain that of all callings that of the sailor was the most wretched, and that he could never understand how any free man could adopt it. Conditions were doubtless far better in 1906 than they were in 1780; nevertheless, the sailor's position was still only too often a disagreeable one. There was but little legal protection; and food, accommodation, hours of work, and conditions generally, were often atrociously bad. Sailors had no means of redress; and they were plundered and ill-used without check by both companies and the owners of trading vessels. The chief point at issue, and the one which occasioned the Merchant Shipping Act, was the question of the so-called "Plimsoll line". It was a measure to protect British ships against overloading. Owners, however, objected to it on the ground that it did not apply to foreign vessels, which were able to use our ports though carrying dangerously heavy cargoes, and consequently were able to underbid British companies in freights. Seizing the opportunity which the raising of this issue provided him with, Lloyd George met owners and sailors, and had not only the Plimsoll line, but also the whole question of the conditions governing the seaman's life, thrashed out. The result was an agreement, accepted by both parties, and endorsed by the Board of Trade. The British load-line was to be slightly modified; but no foreign vessel was to be allowed to enter our ports without conforming to the amended standard. Parliament welcomed the measure; and Lloyd George became the recipient of many congratulatory messages from the leading shipping companies, from sailors' unions, as well as from

his Parliamentary colleagues. The Act laid it down, among other things intended for the protection of the sailor, that in cases of dispute arising between master and crew, the latter were to have legal protection or an official of their unions to assist them. So considerable and numerous were the benefits secured for sailors under the Act that it has not inappropriately been referred to ever since as "The Seaman's Charter".

Two points about the Merchant Shipping Act are deserving of special notice. The first is the method employed for securing its acceptance by both sides: owners and seamen were the "interests" involved; and upon the compromise arranged between them the measure was based. More and more did this method come to be employed, especially in industrial disputes, by Lloyd George himself; and, following his example, by other Ministers eager to emulate his successes. Kept within proper bounds the method is an admirable one, but it obviously lends itself to abuse, inasmuch as employers and employed may deem it worth their while to agree, having regard to their own interest, without having the least consideration for the interest of the community as a whole. In such a case it needs a very strong and conscientious Minister to reject the proposed settlement, with all the specious credit to be derived from it, and to accept the generally unpopular course of allowing the dispute to go on. The other point to notice is the willingness shown by Lloyd George to disregard entirely the old Liberal doctrine of *laissez-faire*, and to go the length of employing legislation to protect British trade against unfair foreign competition. By no means all the rigid Liberals who supported the Act in the House really liked that aspect of it: but Conservatives approved, and there was born the legend that Lloyd George was really a Protectionist at heart.

Further evidence of the fact that Lloyd George was a Protectionist in disguise was furnished for such as wished to believe it by the next piece of legislation upon which he embarked—the Patents Bill of 1907. He was, indeed, complimented by Austen Chamberlain on being already “far on the path” to Tariff Reform; while Bonar Law declared that the measure “sapped the foundations on which the whole of our fiscal system is based”. The point was a simple one. It had often happened that the patents taken out by poor Englishmen were used by foreigners abroad. Now it was ordained that a patent could be revoked if, four years after it had been granted, the patented article was being manufactured exclusively, or mainly, outside the United Kingdom. A clause was inserted, giving foreign companies a year within which to decide either to work in this country on their own patents, or to use here British patents only. But as he had done in the case of the disputes which led to the Merchant Shipping Act, Lloyd George seized the opportunity to review the whole subject of patent law. The consequence of the Act was that patents which would previously have been worked abroad were henceforward worked in England; and foreign firms were quick to put up factories in this country in order not to lose their patent rights. Obviously such a measure was inconsistent with the full Free Trade doctrine. A thorough Free Trader would argue that if patents were used abroad rather than in England, it must be owing to the fact that foreign processes were cheaper and better; and that any profit accruing to the British manufacturer or workman from protective legislation must consequently be made at the expense of the community at large. It was both the strength and the weakness of Lloyd George that such theoretical considerations never perceptibly influenced him. What he saw was an ingenious, and often very needy,

British inventor helping to produce vast sums of money, all of which found its way into some foreigner's pocket. To divert all, or at least some, of that money into the pockets of British workmen and British employers seemed to him to be just plain common sense.

A third resounding triumph fell to the lot of the President of the Board of Trade early in November, 1907. Relations between the Amalgamated Society of Railway Servants, and the great railway companies, were becoming very strained. The employers had not yet learned to respect the power of the men; and their attitude was dictatorial and unyielding. Wages and hours were in dispute at the moment. Tempers were rising on both sides; and it looked as if masters and men were equally spoiling for a fight. It would seem almost incredible (but we have it on the authority of Mr. J. H. Thomas himself) that a *dossier* was kept at Paddington, containing the name of every man in the employment of the Great Western Railway, with comments, depreciating or laudatory, according to whether he was a docile servant or a bit of a rebel. Opposite Thomas's own name was written: "Thomas is a young agitator of whom no notice need be taken." Even more astounding is it to learn that, in conferences between the directors and the men, the latter were compelled to wear their workaday clothes, as their Sunday-best garments would have seemed too much like an assertion of equality! When a deadlock had been reached, both sides turned to the President of the Board of Trade. He, for his part, had been watching the course of the dispute most carefully, making himself fully acquainted with the case of the two sides. His sympathies were with the men; and he had no patience at all with the bullying "take it or leave it" attitude of the employers. Before a ballot had been taken among the employees, he invited representatives of

both sides to meet him. The invitation was accepted and his arguments and firmness persuaded the employers that they would do well to listen to the grievances of the men. He next set to work to draw up a draft settlement which would deal fairly with the whole situation. To most people's surprise, and to the general relief of the community thus threatened with all the inconvenience and loss of a railway strike, this draft was agreed to, and the quarrel was, for the time at all events, at an end.

Loud and unanimous was the applause which greeted this achievement. The Prime Minister, in the name of the country, thanked the President publicly, in the course of a speech at the Guildhall. Nor was the Press behind-hand in paying its meed of praise. *The Times*, which had never shown itself particularly partial to Lloyd George, was generous in its eulogy. He was now coming to be regarded as an almost infallible arbitrator and conciliator, and building up a solid body of confidence in himself on the part of employers and trade unions which was destined to prove of particular value in days to come. For although every employer knew quite well that Lloyd George's sympathy would, *prima facie*, be with the workers, there was a well-founded belief in his essential fairness when presented by both sides with all the facts of the case.

The catalogue of legislative triumphs at the Board of Trade came to a close with the Port of London Bill of 1908; a measure which was designed by Lloyd George while he was still President, but did not reach its second reading until he had quitted that office for the Exchequer. London's splendid river and docks ought to have ensured for it a position second to none among the world's ports. It possessed precisely those geographical advantages which have won for Constantinople and New York their permanent positions of pre-eminence. But owing to the fact

that its organisation was chaotic, power being divided among a score or more authorities, it was now lagging far behind the position which it ought to be occupying, and was easily outdistanced by Liverpool. To abolish this administrative jungle, to educe order out of chaos, and to concentrate all authority in one board, was a task after Lloyd George's own heart. He approached it with all his customary enthusiasm and thoroughness. Part of the preparation consisted in a personal visit which he paid to all the principal Continental ports bordering on the North Sea, to examine the position in them, and to study their organisation. Next there followed the inevitable negotiations with existing vested interests. Finally a Bill was laid before Parliament, which vested all control in a central authority. The proposed arrangement was warmly welcomed by both Commons and Lords, such powerful critics of Lloyd George generally as Bonar Law and Lord Milner giving generous expression to the universal feeling that here was a task well worth doing, excellently done. From that hour, the Port of London has gone ahead; and the wisdom of Lloyd George's reorganisation has been abundantly demonstrated. In the speeches of Opposition Members at the time, one can detect a note of regret that a man who so obviously had in him the makings of an enlightened bureaucrat, and who quite plainly believed in the British Empire, as well as in the duty of protecting the interests of British subjects against unfair foreign competition, should have the bad taste to sit on the Liberal benches, and the worse taste to deliver incendiary speeches against property owners! Were they, perhaps, beginning to hope that this out-and-out Radical, who was maturing so rapidly under their gaze, would some day cross the floor as his famous prototype had done so recently? But in supposing that Lloyd George could ever become a

Conservative, they were underestimating both the sincerity of his democratic sympathies as well as the persistence of the influences which had moulded his early life in Wales. When, however, they assumed that the ties of Party sat somewhat loosely upon him, and that he was in no sense a strict doctrinaire Liberal, they were perfectly right.

If, however, any of Lloyd George's friends or foes were so optimistic as to suppose that high office, and the bureaucratic legislation which occupied so much of his time, would muzzle the democratic leader, they were greatly mistaken. The term "demagogue" has, with us, come to connote a shallow panderer to the popular clamour of the moment. Employed in that sense, it could never—save perhaps for a few weeks in December, 1918—be justly applied to Lloyd George; and in those hectic days, between the signing of the Armistice and the opening of the Peace Conference, of how many British politicians could it be said that they were not demagogues in the worst sense? If, however, we take "demagogue" to mean a true leader of the people, then Lloyd George always was one; and would, in fact, at all times have gloried in the name. The "Leader" has come to mean something very big, and very sinister, in the politics of the world to-day. There is abroad in many countries a romanticism which clamours for a hero to worship; which longs to be able to focus its aspirations and hopes upon the person of one man, who shall immediately, and without the intervention of electoral institutions, instinctively represent the general will. Thus we get our Mussolinis, our Hitlers, and our Ataturks. Opposed to it is the kind of bureaucratic democracy, which conducts its affairs efficiently perhaps, but also drably, by assemblies and committees, jealously preventing any individual from playing too big a part. ~~It~~

between those two extremes is to be found a third possibility—viz. that of a real democratic leader, a “demagogue” in the true sense, who does embody in himself the main stream of political tendency in a particular period, whose utterances give voice to what the dumb millions are pondering in their hearts; but who does not attempt to translate those deep thoughts and desires into laws without the full co-operation of the proper constitutional machinery. Such a leader America found in Lincoln, and France in Gambetta. “Demagogues” are a select band, for nothing seems to be more difficult than for a democracy to produce a real leader. It is, perhaps, not too much to claim for Lloyd George that he was, down to 1918, a leader of that kind; and it may well be doubted whether England ever produced another, before or since, at all events since Oliver Cromwell.

While seeming to be engrossed in the technicalities of his Board of Trade legislation, Lloyd George was, in fact, surveying the general political scene with a very clear eye. Two facts were becoming apparent to him: first, that Liberalism would not for long retain its hold upon the people if it did not become inspired with a great deal more enthusiasm for social reform than the present Parliament had hitherto shown. And secondly, that no Liberal Government possessed the slightest chance of being able to pass important progressive measures, so long as the House of Lords retained undiminished its power of veto. The second of these facts was fully recognised by all the Liberal leaders, who were being incensed by the rejection on the part of the Peers of Bill after Bill passed by overwhelming majorities in the Commons. Gladstone had left as a legacy to his Party the task of doing something to limit this anti-democratic bias in the English Constitution: for the Upper Chamber's rejection of the Home



Rule Bill was regarded as a challenging innovation, and its author had declared that the fight against this attempt at defeating the wishes of the electorate would have to "go on to its issue". When Rosebery's Government went out of office in 1895, every Liberal knew that as soon as the next Liberal Cabinet came into being it would have to take up the challenge or else resign itself to impotence. The Parliament of 1906, in fact, began in this matter at the precise point at which the Parliament of 1895 had left off. Again the Lords persisted in the use of their newly-found method of torpedoing measures passed by enormous majorities in the House of Commons; and it was obvious to every unprejudiced observer that the position had come to be this: when a Conservative Government was in office, England had a unicameral Constitution; but when a Liberal Government was in office, the Constitution automatically became a bicameral one. Indeed the more democratic the country became, the more aristocratic became the Constitution: the more determined the people were to reform our social and economic system drastically, the greater was the resolution of the noble lords to uphold anachronistic privileges. Obviously only revolution could be the outcome of two such conflicting tendencies, if something were not speedily done to remove the obstruction. The Lords were generally astute enough not to veto measures about which organised Labour felt pretty strongly; and consequently they did not lay destructive hands upon the Trade Disputes Act of 1906. Purely Liberal measures, on the other hand—the Education Bill, the Plural Voting Bill, the Temperance Bill, and the Agricultural Holdings Bill—were all either rejected outright, or mangled beyond recognition.

Something would obviously have to be done, and that quickly; but Liberals were not agreed as to what, nor

with regard to the best way of doing it. Some were in favour of accepting the challenge at once ; and, in spite of the Party's huge majority, of dissolving Parliament, and appealing anew to the country on the plain issue of Commons versus Lords. Others, however, shrank from putting the issue to an immediate test, recommending, rather, what came to be known as the policy of " filling the cup " ; that was to say, allowing the Lords to go on rejecting measure after measure, until it should have become palpable to even the stupidest voter that a Liberal Government under such conditions was a futility. But ought the Liberal Party to commit itself to a policy of House of Lords reform, or only to some method of clipping its wings? After much discussion of all these points, Campbell-Bannerman decided upon the policy of the suspensory veto ; and a resolution in its favour was carried, after an acrimonious debate in the House of Commons, by a majority of 285. No Bill, however, was introduced to give effect to this resolution ; and the Lords began to breathe again more freely, though not to amend, even in the slightest degree, their behaviour towards Liberal measures.

Lloyd George was for a policy of no quarter in this struggle with the Peers ; for he saw embodied in the Upper House all those social and political abuses which he hated most—the hereditary principle, snobbishness, the rule of the rich, monopolies, and landlordism. Nor could he ever expect to succeed in passing old measures such as Welsh Disestablishment, to which he was deeply pledged ; or the new measures of social reform, with their inevitable attacks upon the so-called rights of property, which he was meditating, so long as the Lords' veto remained in full vigour. Every time the Peers flung down this challenge to democracy, the smouldering fire within him burst into

flame, and the suave and patient bureaucrat of the Board of Trade became the eager agitator. Liberal audiences which listened to his speeches on the question of the veto of the House of Lords at that time must have had any fears which they may have entertained of his being a "lost leader" completely laid at rest. Combining in one trenchant utterance a warning to the Liberal Party that it must seriously tackle the social problem, and a warning to the Lords that they must cease meddling with Liberal legislation, he declared in a fine speech at Cardiff in 1907, that: "If it were found that a Liberal Government at the end of an average term of office had done nothing to cope seriously with the social conditions of the people, to remove the degradation of the slums, of widespread poverty and destitution in a land glittering with wealth; but they had shrunk from attacking boldly the main causes of this wretchedness, notably drink and the vicious land system; that they had not resisted waste of national resources in armaments, nor provided honourable sustenance for deserving old age; that they had tamely allowed the House of Lords to extract all the virtue out of their Bills, so that the Liberal Statute Books remained simply a bundle of sapless legislative faggots fit only for the fire—then would arise a real cry for a new party, and in that cry many of us here would join. But if a Liberal Government will tackle the landlords and the brewers and the peers, as they have faced the parsons, and try to deliver the country from the pernicious control of this confederacy of monopolists, then the Independent Labour Party will call in vain upon the working man to desert Liberalism." It would be impossible to state more succinctly the political creed of the Lloyd George of 1907, and the succeeding seven years. But he did not counsel an immediate dissolution; and when Nonconformists, especially in Wales, grumbled

impatiently on account of the Government's inactivity in the matter of Disestablishment, and their pusillanimity over the Lords' rejection of the Liberal Education Bill, he recommended them to wait until some really big issue, constituting a favourable battleground, should emerge. As a political strategist he was doubtless right. Nonconformists were apt to fancy that the whole country felt as they did about these measures; whereas, in fact, few Englishmen, no matter of what political complexion, were much moved by anything that could happen in the realm of education; while English interest in Disestablishment was rapidly on the wane. And if the British working classes cared so little for the great benefits conferred upon themselves by the Budget of 1909, and for the rights of their own elected House to control the national purse-strings, as to return the Liberal Government with a majority reduced by more than a half, was it likely that they would have responded with enthusiasm when asked to fight for those other causes in which their interest was so tepid?

But although Lloyd George was not eager to precipitate a struggle there and then, he did believe that it was the duty of a Liberal politician to keep the constitutional grievance well before the eyes of the public, and to whip up resentment against the House of Lords to a point at which it would prove strong enough to overthrow the many formidable barricades behind which the Peers were entrenched.

One of the most formidable of these barricades was the influence of King Edward; who, though a democratically-minded man, yet greatly disliked words or deeds calculated to cast the Constitution into the melting-pot. Particularly annoyed was he whenever a prominent politician used inflammatory words suggestive of class conflict. And if such words were used by a Minister of the Crown, he

claimed the right to rebuke, or at least to remonstrate. For in those days, "Minister of the Crown" was still an accurate description of a Cabinet Minister; and the employer claimed the right to admonish his servant when his behaviour was unseemly. It was in this way that Lloyd George came into conflict with his sovereign. Judged by the standards prevailing in the Courts of those days, King Edward was remarkably free from snobbishness: money, when combined with wit and agreeable manners, had always been a ready passport into his society. "Your Royal Master has gone out sailing with his grocer this morning," was the Kaiser's cutting remark to a British Minister at Cowes; the "grocer" being, of course, Sir Thomas Lipton. Unlike his nephew, the German Emperor, King Edward had no great relish for the company of clever men—writers, scientists, theologians, archæologists, and artists; but he was always eager to know personally the most-talked-of Members of the House of Commons. Consequently, at the time when Lloyd George was denouncing the Boer War, and making himself the most unpopular man in England, the Prince of Wales (as he then was) had intimated to a friend that he would greatly like to meet him at dinner; and the meeting had taken place, with mutual satisfaction.

But in a speech delivered to the Oxford Palmerston Club, Lloyd George fiercely attacked the House of Lords. The time had come, he told his audience, if the Lords insisted on maintaining a claim practically to reject legislation which came to them with the full endorsement of the representatives of the people, to consider another great question; and if a dissolution came, it would be a much more momentous matter than the Education Bill that would come up for consideration. The election would be fought on the issue, whether the country was to be

governed by King and Peers, or by King and People. On previous occasions the King had protested to the Prime Minister against the virulent language employed by the President of the Board of Trade, but without receiving much satisfaction. Here, however, was an opportunity for making an official protest; inasmuch as Lloyd George appeared to have transgressed the rule that the sovereign's name must never be introduced into political controversy. He at once wrote to the Prime Minister to protest, stating curtly that "not even as a phrase" must his name be employed. Campbell-Bannerman, however, had himself been incensed by the recent conduct of the House of Lords, and was in no mood to accept the King's view that the Peers must not be severely handled. Referring to Lloyd George's offending speech, he wrote to the King: "I think he did not greatly err, especially when the altered and exasperating circumstances are considered: Mr. Lloyd George used the phrase out of respect, without the slightest idea of implying any connivance or co-operation, and that was so understood." For the moment the controversy was closed by a letter from the King, in which he declared that "Mr. Lloyd George, as a Cabinet Minister, cannot with propriety indulge in that freedom of speech which, if he were a private Member, he would be at liberty to gratify." On another occasion, Campbell-Bannerman sought tactfully to turn away his sovereign's wrath from his fiery Welsh colleague: "I have passed on to him the objection taken," he wrote, "and admonished him to avoid such a tone in future. Lloyd George is essentially a fighting man, and he has not yet learned that once he gets inside an office his sword and spear should only be used on extreme occasions, and with the consent of his colleagues. In all business connected with his department, and in the House of Commons work, he is most conciliatory, but the combative

spirit seems to get the better of him when he is talking about other subjects. I greatly regret his outburst, but hope it will not be repeated." This "hope" was never to be realised, for Lloyd George could not bring himself to admit that every Cabinet Minister was bound to be a defender of the existing order, or to use language which in no way corresponded to the warmth of his feelings. Right down to 1914 the tradition remained that Lloyd George, although an excellent administrator, and a magnificent debater, was undignified, scurrilous, and irresponsible on the platform.

King Edward, although in some respects remarkably free and easy, was as particular on all points of decoration, clothing, and official ceremony, as any Habsburg Emperor could be. Many are the tales now told about his anger on beholding a star wrongly worn, or a title wrongly applied; and although the rebuke which invariably followed such errors was generally charged with good humour and good nature, it was nevertheless always intended to be taken seriously to heart. Even Lord Rosebery was on at least one occasion rebuked for entering the royal presence incorrectly clad. It is not then to be wondered at that a man like Lloyd George, who had not been brought up on even the outer fringes of Court circles, nor gone through a period of schooling in ceremonial etiquette, should occasionally transgress. We find, for example, the King writing to Asquith—then Prime Minister—in 1908, and concluding his letter with a request that he should convey a hint to Lloyd George "that when he writes to the King he should call himself the 'Chancellor of the Exchequer', as has always been done from time immemorial, and not 'Mr. Lloyd George'". It must not, however, be inferred from these little passages of arms between Lloyd George and his sovereign that their relationship was one of hostility. On

the contrary, a mutual respect, and indeed a good deal of friendly feeling, had developed between them before the close of the reign. For each was a broad, tolerant man, with a great capacity for seeing the human side of things, and of being amused. Nor did King Edward altogether fail to fall under the spell of that personal magnetism which has made it always extremely difficult for people who have come into fairly intimate personal contact with Lloyd George to go on cherishing a dislike of him. As Minister in Attendance, Lloyd George was always a pronounced success, particularly in the holiday atmosphere of Balmoral; though he was never, in King Edward's day, the welcome guest that he proved to be in the reign of George V, whose family of young children were always delighted with Lloyd George's high spirits, his inexhaustible good humour, and his willingness to play the most boisterous games.

Fortunately, with the advent of men of Lloyd George's type to the Cabinet, there occurred also a big transformation in the ways of Buckingham Palace; and things which had been regarded as offensive and a serious breach of decorum by Edward VII, came to be taken in perfect good part by George V. But down to the end of his reign, King Edward, from time to time, sent vigorous protests, first to Campbell-Bannerman, and, later on, to Asquith, against their inability, or their refusal, to curb the tongue of the Welsh demagogue! That Lloyd George was fully justified in disregarding these royal admonitions would probably be admitted by everybody to-day.

The belief that Lloyd George was nothing more than a brilliant but irresponsible chatterer, died hard. During his tenure of the Presidency of the Board of Trade it was sedulously inculcated by the less respectable sections of the Tory Press. In particular, the *Daily Mail* led the chorus of depreciation; and in the light of Lloyd George's subsequent



career, and especially remembering the part played by Lord Northcliffe in elevating him to the Premiership, some of the diatribes of those days make very amusing reading. "He is as reckless in Government as he was in Opposition," declared the *Daily Mail*, "talking always of things which he does not understand, and declaiming against institutions of which he does not know the history. If we needed another proof that the demagogue is unfit to take part in the administration of the country, here it is ready to our hand." On another occasion, the same newspaper ventured upon a prophecy: "Since he has been at the Board of Trade he has not had time, even if he had the ability, to think. The exaltation of office has been too great. Nobody in the country knows less concerning the policy of his Government than Mr. Lloyd George, and, in a facile stream of chatter, knowledge, judgment, and dignity are all submerged. That he will ever enter a Cabinet again is unlikely: and when his political career comes to a hasty end, it will be found that it was the great moment of his life when, disguised in the respectable uniform of a policeman, he fled before the foolish mob which thought it worth while to silence his traitorous speech." For those who only remember the enormously popular Lloyd George of the concluding year of the Great War, or who have only known the much-abused, yet nationally-petted statesman in the retirement of more recent times, it must be hard to realise that, from 1906 to 1914, he was far and away the most hated figure in British politics, daily bespattered with newspaper venom, the target for incessant bombardment on Conservative platforms, the symbol, for large masses of the community, of red ruin and civil strife. Yet it is only fair to state that the leaders of the Conservative Party, however much they may have deprecated his unbridled use of invective, and his attacks upon so many of

the things which they considered sacred, were generous enough in private in their tribute to his abilities and his personality. They felt, in fact, a very real admiration for him; and that accounts, very largely, for their willingness, without exception, to serve under his leadership in the War. Nor were the Conservative newspapers either always contemptuous and hostile. When Lloyd George succeeded Asquith as Chancellor of the Exchequer, we find *The Times* making this comment: "No better man could have been found for the post, however free Mr. Asquith might have been in his choice." Even the *Daily Mail*, using to the full a popular newspaper's prerogative of unsaying to-day what it had emphatically said yesterday, paid a warm tribute: "Mr. Lloyd George's career", it declared, "is the best and fullest justification of this selection. He has proved in office that he possesses in exceptional measure the practical business capacity, self-restraint, initiative, and large open-mindedness which, allied with the faculty of combination, are required of one who will control the national finances." It must be borne in mind, of course, that these laudatory phrases were penned before the opening of the "People's Budget" and the making of the Limehouse speech!

In the field of British politics Lloyd George was evidently making good; and despite the *Daily Mail's* rash prediction that he would never again enter a Cabinet, no impartial onlooker would doubt that ere long he would receive promotion to one of the highest posts in the Government. He was, moreover, coming increasingly to be looked upon in England as the champion above all others of the Left Wing of the Liberal Party. Hundreds of thousands of ardent reformers, men who regarded Asquith with sincere admiration and respect, and whose feelings towards Grey and Haldane were coldly indifferent, made a hero of Lloyd

George. He was their ideal of the fighting politician; the man who saw things as the ordinary man saw them, but who possessed abilities, and a driving power, which ordinary men were without, and by the aid of which he would succeed in compelling recalcitrant and obscurantist bodies like the House of Lords to bow to the people's will.

But while Lloyd George's stock was mounting high in England, in Wales the hero was passing under a cloud. The cloud, it is true, passed; and it was succeeded by another period of dazzling popularity; nevertheless, it is fairly certain that one of the sure bonds which united him to his own countrymen was at this time broken, and broken for ever. Frenzied shouting and waving of handkerchiefs became a habit in Wales when Lloyd George appeared on a public platform; but the noise did not always imply agreement, nor did it come from quite the same depth of heart as the old plaudits which used to greet him when he was fighting for the things most dear to the true Welsh Nationalist. The Welsh people have always felt proud of his achievements, and of the great part which he has played in world affairs. Nor have they been ungrateful for the things which he accomplished for Wales in the first eight years of his Parliamentary career. But never, perhaps, after 1906 did they feel that he was one of themselves in the old sense, or that he was giving to Wales in his thoughts quite that unique position which he used to give. The big world of British politics was beginning to come between this man and his own people. Lloyd George had, as time went on, new interests and new friends; and although he tried hard and sincerely to be faithful to the old, and even fancied, in all probability, that he was succeeding, his former associates thought otherwise: and they were right.

It was over Disestablishment that the first trouble arose.

No Englishman, perhaps, has ever succeeded in fully understanding the Welshman's attitude towards Disestablishment. For the Englishman it was a religious question; but in the eyes of the Welshman it was far more political than religious. For him Disestablishment meant Wales a nation, and it was precisely in that light that Lloyd George had presented the Welsh case again and again, in the House of Commons, and in the country. Rightly he had always insisted that the great issue at stake was whether Wales really constituted a political entity, and consequently whether it was entitled to decide for itself what kind of Church, if any, to establish. The Church of England might, or might not, be the best Church for Wales in a religious sense: that had nothing to do with the question. If the Welsh people did not want the Anglican Church, they were entitled to get rid of it by depriving it of its official position in their midst. Acceptance of the policy of Welsh Disestablishment, then, on the part of a British Government was tantamount to the recognition of Wales as a nation; while conversely, its absence from a Party programme was taken to mean that the Government regarded Wales simply as a geographical region of England. To grasp this view of the matter is to understand why Welshmen regarded Disestablishment in much the same way as Irishmen regarded Home Rule. Both nations implicitly believed that they were fully entitled to destroy a Government which showed reluctance to comply with their demand. It should also be borne in mind that Wales, at the 1906 General Election, had not returned a single Conservative to Parliament; and that this unanimous vote was, above all else, a vote in support of Disestablishment. Was not the Government under a moral obligation, then, if it professed to believe at all in the cause of Welsh nationalism, to proceed without delay

to give expression to that belief in the form of the longed-for, and often-promised, measure? This argument was a cogent one; and to resist its implications was all the more difficult for Lloyd George, inasmuch as a seeming desertion of the Welsh cause on his part would indubitably be attributed by his enemies, and possibly even by his friends, to self-interest, to a determination to stick to the high office which he had won, and to do nothing to forfeit the favour of the Prime Minister, in the hope of being rewarded with even higher office in the future. Murmurs began to be heard in Wales not long after the meeting of Parliament in 1906, when the crowded legislative programme of the new Liberal Government made it pretty clear that there would not be much chance for a Disestablishment Bill. Sharply worded protests came both from England and from Wales, as 1907 followed 1906 with nothing having been done. At a meeting of the Bangor Liberal Association, one speaker proposed that Lloyd George, "in view of his betrayal of the cause", should not be invited to address them. The Congregational churches of Caernarvonshire passed a vote of censure on the Government, and demanded that Lloyd George should surrender his post in a Cabinet "which has thus insulted his nation and his co-religionists". Soon every Liberal platform and newspaper in the Principality was resounding with denunciations of the great betrayal. Protests were also heard in English Free Church circles. Robertson Nicoll, in the columns of the *British Weekly*, published a pungent criticism of the Government, and in particular, of Lloyd George, who, unlike his colleagues, was sinning against the light. An immediate General Election, he declared, would involve the certain defeat of the Government; for every Nonconformist would vote against it. "What has Mr. Lloyd George done for Wales?" demanded the famous journalist. "Well, he

has given Wales the Welsh Commission, a boon which the Principality is deeply pondering. Mr. Lloyd George is detained by mysterious providences from appearing at Nonconformist gatherings nowadays, but he will have to explain himself to the nation that has so trusted him. If Wales is satisfied, there is no more to say, but is there one Welshman who believes that the present Government will take up Disestablishment?" Most certainly Wales was not satisfied: on the contrary, it sent an influential deputation to wait upon the Prime Minister, and to demand from him a specific pledge. Always a hater of deception in any shape or form, Campbell-Bannerman refused to make any promise; but intimated that if the existing Parliament were to run its normal course, he would endeavour to carry a Disestablishment and Disendowment Bill. This promise was also underlined by Lloyd George in a message which he sent to the Welsh Congregational Union.

Throughout this unhappy episode, Lloyd George's self-defence was that he believed as much as ever in the necessity for Disestablishment, and was fully determined to fight until it was placed upon the Statute Book; but that until the issue between Commons and Lords had been settled, it would be futile to proceed with a Bill. The House of Lords, if left in full possession of its power of veto, would never pass a measure of Welsh Disestablishment and Disendowment. Let Welsh Liberals, then, he argued, keep their fighting ranks in order, and give to the Government their fullest support in the fast-approaching battle with the Upper House. That there was force in this line of argument was fully appreciated in Wales; nevertheless, misgivings were by no means removed. What would be the position of Disestablishment in an election following a Parliament in which it had never been put before the House in the form of a Bill? Such an election would presumably

be fought on the issue of Commons versus Lords, and the indictment against the latter would consist of all the Liberal measures which they had rejected or mutilated. Would not Disestablishment be incurring a severe handicap if it did not appear in the list? No, Wales was not satisfied; and some of Lloyd George's closest and ablest Parliamentary colleagues—men like Llewelyn Williams and Ellis Griffith—were on the side of the rebels. It was decided to summon a Welsh National Convention to thrash the matter out.

The convention assembled at Cardiff on October 10th, 1907. Its members were in no conciliatory frame of mind. A Nonconformist League had been formed in the Principality, pledged to fight for Disestablishment to the exclusion of every other object. There appeared to be an overwhelming mass of opinion opposed to the policy of trusting the Government further without a specific pledge that the demands of Wales would be attended to without more procrastination. Obviously a situation was developing which, if not tactfully handled, might easily lead to a political rebellion; and the Tory newspapers were already jubilant. Strongly worded resolutions condemnatory of the Government had been drafted, and everything seemed to indicate that the convention would carry them by large majorities. It is significant that Lloyd George, until so recently the idol of the nation, had not been invited to attend. Perhaps the delegates had a presentiment that if he were to come, and to speak, their resolution would melt away before the heat of his eloquence? But it has never been Lloyd George's custom to run away from a difficult situation, especially when the difficulty has taken the form of a rebellious audience. With great cunning he accordingly got himself chosen as a delegate, and announced his intention of being present. It was one of those bold strokes, with

their win all or lose all, in which he delights. Even the announcement of his coming caused a slump in the determination of the rebellious Liberals; and they awaited the day with words of defiance on their lips, but with trepidation in their hearts.

On the day previous to the meeting of the convention, Lloyd George arrived at Cardiff; and at a meeting of the executive, that very afternoon, he won his first victory. Resolutions which amounted to a vote of censure on the Government were so amended that they amounted to little more than friendly exhortation. It remained to be seen whether the 2,500 delegates next day would be so easily deflected from their purpose. When several speeches had been delivered, some friendly, others defiant, Lloyd George rose to address the meeting. He began tactfully, declaring that he rejoiced at these signs of uneasiness in Wales, since they clearly indicated an undiminished determination to carry Disestablishment into law. But why blame the Government? Above all, why be guilty of the folly of dividing the forces of Liberalism? Nothing could be done, he went on, until the House of Lords had been defeated; and to bring about that consummation, every Liberal vote in the country would be required. The audience, however, was still dissatisfied; and at that point, the Reverend Evan Jones, of Caernarvon, the chief leader of the revolt, as he was also one of the chief leaders of Welsh Liberalism, sprang to his feet, and put to Lloyd George the explicit interrogatory: "If a Disestablishment Bill has not been introduced when the Government dissolves, will the question go before the country?" When Lloyd George replied to this question with an emphatic "Certainly", there was general applause, and the back of the revolt had been broken. Lloyd George knew that he had won a victory; nevertheless, to make the matter sure,



he launched upon one of his finest oratorical efforts, ending with a peroration which brought the delegates to their feet in a tempest of cheering.

"Recognise our difficulties," he cried, "be fair to us, and we will be true to you. No man gives his best to a people who distrust him, who, the moment difficulties arise, assail him with suspicion. You have got to trust somebody—(A voice: 'Lloyd George?') Oh! let me say this to you: if you can find a better, go to him, but in the meantime, don't fire at us from behind. Who said that I was going to sell Wales? Seven years ago, there was a little country, which I never saw, fighting for freedom, fighting for fair play. I had never been within a thousand miles of it, never known any of its inhabitants. Pardon me for reminding you—I risked my seat: I risked my livelihood—it was leaving me. (A voice: 'You risked your life.') Yes, I risked my life. Am I going to sell the land I love? *Duw a wyr mor anwyl yw Cymru lân i mi.*" By this time, tears and sobs were intermingled with cheers and the waving of handkerchiefs. The nation's hero had been reinstated; the happy family was one again; Lloyd George could go back to London and tell his Cabinet colleagues that, although they would have to cease regarding Wales as a pawn in the Liberal game, and that a Disestablishment Bill would have to be forthcoming soon, no outside opposition need be apprehended from the Welsh Members for the present.

The autumn of 1907 found Lloyd George in high favour in almost every quarter. He was greatly esteemed by the business world, which thought highly of his open mind, his power of swift decision, and his administrative efficiency. His Cabinet colleagues had found him fertile of counsel and expert in practice, as well as a tower of strength in the House of Commons. The King, despite his occasional

growling, was beginning to realise that the days of suave courtesies between Parliamentary opponents who agreed in the main upon the big issues, were at an end, and that a new epoch, of fighting with the gloves off, to which he must as a constitutional monarch, adjust himself, was dawning. King Edward, moreover, felt a sincere liking for Lloyd George in private life ; for he was seldom without genuine admiration for the brilliant self-made man. As the idol of Liberals in the constituencies, Lloyd George had out-distanced all rivals. He was regarded as the rising hope of the stern and unbending Radicals, who were resolved upon destroying all that remained of political privilege, as well as upon launching an attack without delay upon the fortresses of economic privilege. Finally, his own countrymen, after a few weeks of doubt, had rallied to him with all the old fervour. Well might Lloyd George have felt, in October, 1907, that the Fates were smiling upon him.

At that moment, like a bolt from the blue, came the biggest blow that Lloyd George has ever been called upon to bear : his eldest daughter, Mair Eluned, died. This girl was near seventeen years old. Already she was famed for her beauty, her mental abilities, her exquisite charm, and her lovable disposition. Everybody who knew Mair loved her. By her father it is no exaggeration to say that she was adored. The two spent every possible moment together ; and she—wise beyond her years—was not only a source of joy to the busy politician in his idle moments, but already a friend with whom he could discuss the serious affairs of his calling. At the end of November she was suddenly taken ill. It was appendicitis. An operation was performed ; but on the last day of the month she died. They laid her to rest in the little cemetery at Criccieth, hardly a stone's throw from the farm, her mother's home, in which she had been born. The great mountains look down upon

it; and in front lies the sea. Beside it runs the lane which she and her father must have traversed countless times arm-in-arm.

Lloyd George had but little time to indulge his grief, for on the very day of the funeral he was summoned to attend to a threatened strike in the cotton industry; and all parties were crying for the interposition of the President of the Board of Trade, with his famous powers of conciliation. It was well that it should have been so; for nothing but work of the hardest, and public cares in plenty, could make the private sorrow endurable. Shortly afterwards Lloyd George was taken abroad by a friend, in the hope that the distraction of strange and interesting sights would assuage his grief. Some measure of relief he no doubt did find in them; but the letters which he wrote home at the time are so poignant, that, read even now, after the lapse of thirty years, they bring tears to the eye. Nor was this sorrow quickly or easily overcome. More than a year later, Lloyd George called at a friend's house, and was shown into the drawing-room. When the friend entered, a few minutes afterwards, he saw him lying on a sofa, shaken with convulsive sobs: he had seen a portrait of Mair on the mantelpiece. Several years after this, when he had become an even more famous man, a friend said to him one day: "When you die, we shall bury you in Westminster Abbey." "No, you won't," came the swift reply, "you will bury me in the shadow of the mountains." He was still thinking of Mair, in her quiet resting-place at Criccieth. Later, Megan came to play a big part in her father's life; but those who know him best, more particularly the Welsh friends of his early surroundings, have always felt that something went out of Lloyd George's life with the death of Mair, which nothing has been able ever fully to replace. It seemed to be the severing of one of the strongest ties binding him

to the old life at Criccieth. So long as his uncle—Richard Lloyd—lived, Lloyd George's anchorage was firm; but when he, too, had gone, it became clear to all that the charm of Criccieth was broken, and that the Prime Minister in retirement was able to feel as much at home at Churt as at Llanystumdwy. The consequent spiritual loss to him was incalculable. At the time of Richard Lloyd's death, the Great War was carrying Lloyd George onward to dizzy heights of fame and power, and he had but to flow with the torrent: but the foundations were giving way: the fount from which he had drawn every true inspiration of his life was drying up, and the consequence was the purposeless career of the years after 1919.

## CHAPTER TEN

### CHANCELLOR OF THE EXCHEQUER [1908]

THE spring of 1908 brought a change in the Premiership. Campbell-Bannerman, lamented by all, and certainly not least by those who had done their best to get rid of him in 1905, first resigned, and soon afterwards died. Lloyd George felt the loss keenly; for the two men had been excellent colleagues. On the vast majority of first-rate issues they were in complete agreement; and neither of them ever forgot that, in the dark days of the Boer War, they had both risked their careers in a protest against the Imperialism of the Government and its supporters. Campbell-Bannerman, although a wealthy man, was a real democrat; and, like almost all Scots, singularly free from class consciousness. He had found it perfectly easy to work with the lowly-born Welshman, and he admired the temerity with which he rushed to do battle with such formidable foes as the House of Lords, not to speak of such mighty gladiators as Chamberlain and Balfour. Lloyd George was always absolutely loyal to Campbell-Bannerman, and his grief when he died was a very real one. "The cause of human progress", he told a Manchester audience, "has sustained a deep and sad loss. Our great leader, Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman, has passed away—one of the kindest hearts and one of the wisest heads that ever filled the high position of chief counsellor to his sovereign in this country. It is only those who have been closely associated with him for years in

the great work of Liberalism in this country who can realise what a loss it is to every great cause that he should have passed away. He was a man of deep, tender sympathies, a true friend of the people, a man who, whenever he was in doubt, always dropped on the side of the people. It is a greater loss than the people know, and one they will realise more and more, that we should have lost his sapient and tender guidance in such a crisis in the history of our cause." These words were sincerely spoken; for Lloyd George had always realised that it was Campbell-Bannerman who had taken the risk of first raising him from the ranks, and that at a time when it would still have been possible to leave him out of the Cabinet on the grounds of his supposed "irresponsibility" and "unreliability". With Asquith his relations could never be quite the same. In the first place, the two men had differed fundamentally in their respective attitudes towards Chamberlain's Imperialism: and the suspicion that Asquith, Grey and Haldane were simply carrying on the foreign policy of Balfour and Lansdowne played a big part in the internal politics of the Liberal Ministry down to 1914. It was, as events proved, an eminently well-founded suspicion. Furthermore, Lloyd George was now a Cabinet Minister of three years' standing, with an outstandingly brilliant record of achievement to his credit. He felt sure of himself, and of his position in the Party; and there could be nothing in the nature of presumption in his expecting to be promoted to a post of first-class importance. In fact, Liberals as a whole were coming to be divided into two wings—a right wing looking for leadership to Asquith, and a left wing, looking for leadership to Lloyd George. Both statesmen had an immense following, and their co-operation tended to be in the nature of a duumvirate. Asquith has been blamed for his alleged free-and-easy driving

of the Ministerial team, for allowing some of his colleagues too great a measure of individual freedom, thereby jeopardising the principle of collective Cabinet responsibility. Some blame may possibly be due; for Asquith would suffer much if thereby he could ensure a quiet life for himself, and he always was inclined to connive at things which he really disapproved of; but on the whole, it must be admitted that, in allowing Lloyd George and Winston Churchill to plunge more energetically towards the left than the majority of the Cabinet really approved of, he was showing political sagacity, and a realisation of the fact that these men were the mouthpieces of the younger, and more vital, Liberalism of the country, to offend which would be to play directly into the hands of the Labour Party. As the famous Budget of 1909 came to be regarded more and more as a symbol of class conflict; and as the campaign against the House of Lords developed in intensity and ferocity, there were many, even among Liberal Members of Parliament, who thought that in making Lloyd George Chancellor of the Exchequer, Asquith had committed a serious blunder. The same people, sixteen years later, blamed Asquith for putting the first Labour Government into power. To both charges the answer is the same: Asquith was a democrat to his finger-tips, and he would have thought it wrong, no matter how great the apparent disadvantages and dangers, to use his position in order to flout what was clearly the wish of a considerable part, if not a majority, of the electorate. It may be taken as certain that at least a half of the Liberals in the country in 1908 wanted Lloyd George to be second-in-command; and that being the case, Asquith quite rightly deemed it to be his duty to appoint him Chancellor of the Exchequer, though his own choice, perhaps, would have fallen on McKenna, who was a sound financier, though an ineffective Minister,

and without any following in the country. When discussing the personnel of a possible new Cabinet with King Edward just before the latter's departure for Biarritz, and before Campbell-Bannerman had formally resigned, Asquith had suggested that he himself should combine the Chancellorship of the Exchequer with the office of Prime Minister, but he seems soon to have changed his mind on that point; and so when he had somewhat perfunctorily offered the Exchequer to Morley, who had the claim of seniority, but who preferred to remain at the India Office, and to go to the House of Lords, he apparently took it for granted that Lloyd George was the inevitable man for the post.

Disputes which arose between them at a much later date must not mislead us into supposing that, in the years before 1914, Asquith entertained any dislike of Lloyd George, or had any serious objection to his policy. The truth is (as we read in Asquith's official biography) that he was greatly attracted by the middle-aged, and the younger firebrands—Lloyd George and Winston Churchill—liking their exuberance and vitality, and inclining to look on with amused indulgence when they got themselves into scrapes. There were immense differences in temperament, to be sure; for Asquith was as cool, stable, balanced, and imperturbable, as Lloyd George was fiery, rash, given to seeing only one side of a thing at a time, and impulsive. But these differences did not prevent the two men from working together amicably and fruitfully. Indeed, the combination of such diverse qualities was regarded by many competent students of the political scene as a perfect blending of characteristics and powers, all of which were necessary for effective leadership of the Liberal forces at that juncture. Nor is there any ground for suggesting that Asquith took a more lenient view of the conduct of the House of Lords



than did his more impetuous colleague. On the contrary, every inch of his constitutional self was outraged by what he regarded as an attempt to wreck the proper working of the Party system, and to nullify the declared will of the electorate, by the undeviating Conservative policy of the Upper House. Asquith and Grey expressed their opinion of the Lords with greater restraint, and with more of conventional urbanity; but there is not the slightest reason for suggesting that their opposition to the usurpations of the Peers was any less sincere, or any less unflinching.

King Edward, as we have already seen, had discussed with Asquith, some weeks before Campbell-Bannerman's resignation, the proposed reconstruction of the Cabinet; and when the final list was presented to him at Biarritz, he would seem to have raised no sort of objection to having Lloyd George at the Exchequer. The scrutinising of proposed Ministerial appointments in King Edward's day was a very real thing. He frequently objected to this man and that, and suggested other nominees for particular offices; and if he had thought that there was anything dangerous or undesirable in having Lloyd George appointed to the office which, in those days, carried with it the strong likelihood of succession to the Premiership, he would undoubtedly have said so. No doubt King Edward, like the majority of his subjects, was getting accustomed to the new modes of political controversy, and coming to realise that he must move with the times.

Imperialists and right-wing Liberals might feel alarmed at Lloyd George's promotion; but a very large proportion of Liberals were more seriously perturbed by the non-Radical composition of the Ministry as a whole. Nearly all the key positions, it seemed to them, were held by Imperialists. Asquith was Prime Minister, Grey was Foreign Secretary, Haldane was at the War Office. The

old antagonisms were still smouldering beneath the surface ; and the Lord Chancellor—Lord Loreburn—went about complaining to his friends that these men were no better than Jingoes in Liberal clothing. Moreover, the tide of reaction was already flowing strong in the constituencies ; and was Asquith—so cold, so academic, so nicely balanced, so aloofly ensconced in his aristocratic highbrow circle—the man to stem it ? Liberals had been in power for three years ; yet how little had been accomplished ! The great measures which had formed the staple of Liberal manifestoes for a quarter of a century were still unrealised dreams ; and so long as these blocked the way, what prospect was there of measures embodying the desires and aspirations of the younger generation gaining a place in the Party programme ? Year after year the Government seemed content to plough the sands, and to spend months in the discussion of Bills which they knew, as a foregone conclusion, would be rejected by the House of Lords. Had not the time come for some far more drastic steps to be taken ? Thinking these and kindred thoughts, the more truly progressive Liberals in Parliament and in the country drew consolation from the fact that Lloyd George was now the second man in the Government, and that his ardent follower—Winston Churchill—was in the Cabinet. Around these two the out-and-out Liberals tended more and more to gather ; begging to be given a really strong lead, and a policy which would have no truce with the ridiculous and disastrous assumption that not a word ought to be spoken by a responsible Minister which might tend to let loose the powers of discontent and unrest among the working classes.

Asquith's first speech as Prime Minister was a characteristic utterance—moderate, firm, tactful, full of thought, and couched in that splendid diction which no other statesman of the day could rival. He declared himself

to be a Liberal; and promised that he would judge all measures by the touchstone of Liberalism. "There is a lot of country still to traverse," he declared, "steep hills to climb, stiff fences to take, deep, and even turbulent, streams to cross before we come to the end of our going; but we know where we are going, and we shall not lose our way. . . . I do not come here to preach a new gospel. The old gospel is good enough for me, and I believe for you also. I have been a Liberal all my life—from the very first time that I could ever think about politics—and a Liberal I mean to remain to the end. I am a Liberal and you are Liberals, I believe for the same reason. Why? Because we find in Liberalism a true ideal, and in the Liberal Party the most potent instrument for maintaining all that is good and fruitful in what we have inherited from the past; and what is a still more important matter, in securing for our people—for all classes of our people—a wider outlook, a more even level of opportunity, and for each and for all, a richer and a fuller corporate life." These sonorous phrases, so characteristic of their author, indicate both the strength and the weakness of the new Prime Minister. In them we see that firm grasp of principle which enabled him with marvellous success to follow the guiding gleam of Liberal principle through the many dark and confused days which lay ahead. But we perceive also symptoms of that fatal inclination to regard a debating triumph as an achievement in statesmanship, which lent some colour of truth to the largely false legend of later days, that Asquith was a man of words rather than of deeds. In its strength and in its weakness the passage is poles apart from anything that Lloyd George could have uttered in the like circumstances. For it is open to doubt whether Lloyd George ever understood even what a systematic body of Liberal doctrine means. In 1922, when his Coalition Government

was drifting about an uncharted sea, with no apparent direction or port in view, he seemed to be genuinely mystified when opponents, and especially opponents who had once been ardent supporters, accused him of having no political principles. "Everybody who happens to dislike what I am doing thinks he has discovered some eternal principle," he naively explained. It was then that the serious defect in his education, of the absence of those years of political discipleship, in which he ought to have been turning over the pages of Aristotle, Hobbes, Burke, Mill, and T. H. Green, under the guidance of a trained scholar, manifested itself with tragic consequences for himself, his Party, and his country. For it was clearly proved that a hatred of tyranny, of monopoly, and of inequality, coupled with a passion for fair play and the sweeping away of ancient abuses, is not enough to guarantee fruitful and wise statesmanship. Intuitive instinct in statesmanship is generally nothing more than a euphemism for the happy guess; and even the ablest men who rely upon guesswork are apt to fail to guess right at a crucial moment. So long as Lloyd George was working hand-in-hand with Asquith, each supplying what was lacking in the other, he was a triumphant success; but left to his own devices, and seconded by politicians and charlatans whose grip of political principle was even weaker than his own, in my opinion he failed disastrously.

Asquith, at the moment when he became Prime Minister, had two unfinished pieces of legislation on his hands: he had guided the new Licensing Bill through its first reading; and he had prepared his Budget for the year. And as Budget Day was close at hand, he had intimated to Lloyd George that he would himself deal with it, and allow the new Chancellor to open his first Budget in 1909. The Licensing Bill led to the new Prime Minister's first encounter

with the House of Lords ; and from that moment he seems to have made up his mind that the crushing of the power of the Peers must be his main task. The majority of social reformers were agreed that, in the interests of the morals, the health, and the general well-being of the people of this country, some more stringent method of controlling the drink traffic ought to be discovered ; and the Nonconformist vote, upon which the Liberal Government was so dependent, was solid behind any effective remedy that might be proposed. Asquith's Bill was a simple one : it proposed to reduce the number of existing licences by about one-third, over a period of fourteen years, during which time compensation provided by a levy on the trade was to be paid for the licences extinguished. At the end of fourteen years compensation was to cease ; and local option was to come into play, either for prohibition, or for the limitation of numbers. In the meantime, the granting of new licences, which in no case was to bring the numbers beyond the scheduled scale for each parish or area, might be prohibited by local option. " Drastic reduction of public-houses, re-establishment of the theory that the licence was an annual permit to sell drinks which could be revoked without compensation by the authority which gave it, and on this basis the establishment of local option after a period of delay, were, in brief, the objects of this measure."

Many references have already been made in the course of this narrative to the protection which the Conservative Party seemed to feel itself bound to afford to the drink traffic in the thirty years before the Great War, but their opponents were amazed at the outburst of fury with which the very mild provisions of this Bill were greeted. " Brigandage ", " spoliation ", " blackmail ", " hypocrisy ", were a few of the opprobrious epithets with which

it was assailed. The Tories chose to regard it as an attack upon property; for they had persuaded themselves, and had induced others to believe, that the publican's licence differed in no respect from his garden or his horse. Every effort was made to appeal to the diverse feelings and prejudices of different sections of the community. The working man was told that the Bill was a tyrannous attempt at limiting his legitimate pleasures. Investors were informed that it was "an attack on the savings of the people". The Bishop of Manchester gave it as his belief that "the licensing system rested on something which should be far better than any freehold—that is, the goodwill of the State". Timid property owners were alarmed by being told that this was but the thin end of the wedge of a policy of spoliation and confiscation to be pursued by a *sans-culotte* Government. Lloyd George had never faltered in his championship of temperance legislation; and he played an active part in the debates on the Licensing Bill of 1908. It is, perhaps, permissible to assume that in his heart of hearts he was anxious that the House of Lords should reject it, for he had by now grown very impatient with the forbearance of his colleagues, and was eager to embark upon a fight to a finish with the Upper House.

With the Prime Minister's consent, the King had interviewed Lord Lansdowne, and endeavoured to persuade him to induce the Peers to amend the Bill rather than reject it outright. For the King had for many months past been observing the political scene with growing apprehension. His fine political instinct told him that the existing state of affairs could not possibly continue; and that if the Lords persisted in rejecting every major Liberal measure, a campaign for the extirpation of the Upper House would sooner or later become inevitable. He saw, as the purblind Conservative leaders of the day apparently did not see, that

in an age of growing and articulate democracy, the one hope of maintaining the hereditary principle in governmental institutions was for its powers to be used very sparingly, seldom for anything more than the amendment of Bills, and certainly never for the total rejection of measures for which it could reasonably be supposed that there was a majority in the country. His Majesty expressed to Lansdowne the fear that "if the attitude of the Peers was such as to suggest the idea that they were obstructing an attempt to deal with the evils of intemperance, the House of Lords would suffer seriously in popularity". He further informed him that he "had reason to know that his Ministers were ready to make considerable concessions to the Opposition, notably in regard to the time limit, which they would, he thought, extend to twenty or twenty-one years, if pressed to do so". Lansdowne, however, would give no reassuring reply, for he was perfectly aware that his fellow-Peers had already made up their minds to reject the Licensing Bill, and it is fairly clear from the evidence that he himself also favoured that drastic step. A few of the leading peers (Lords St. Aldwyn, Cromer, Milner, Balfour of Burleigh, and Lytton) had striven hard to persuade their Party to adopt a different course; but they were overruled. There is good reason to suppose that "The Trade" had informed the Party managers that, if they accepted the Bill in any shape or form, the brewers and publicans would have to re-consider their immemorial policy of giving support to every Conservative candidate. It is at least noteworthy that the Conservative leaders in the Commons, Balfour conspicuous among them, used their influence on the side of total rejection. In the House of Commons the Licensing Bill had been carried by a majority of 246. By the House of Lords it was rejected by a majority of 176!

Asquith's last Budget was a noteworthy performance. It followed on a period of the most careful husbanding of the public funds; and the Chancellor could boast of having reduced debt on an unprecedented scale while at the same time building up revenue to a point which allowed a generous margin for social reform, more particularly for the long-overdue Old Age Pensions. In spite of the fact that the pensions would cost £2,240,000 in the first year, and soon afterwards mount up to £6,000,000, he decided upon reducing the sugar tax, thereby depriving the revenue of some £3,400,000. As things then stood, there was nothing particularly rash in this remission; but in the course of the following year, huge additional sums came to be required by the Navy, with the consequence that, if the Budget of 1909 was to be balanced, either pensions, and possibly other social services, would have to be abandoned, or else new sources of revenue would have to be tapped. That was the situation confronting Lloyd George when he sat down to frame his own first Budget.

On May 27th, 1908, Asquith himself introduced his Old Age Pensions Bill. It was a modest enough measure, which conferred a right to a pension of five shillings a week at the age of seventy on persons who had not more than £21 a year, or eight shillings a week, of their own; and smaller sums on a sliding scale down to one shilling a week on those who had not more than £31 10s. a year, or from eleven shillings to twelve shillings a week. Paupers and habitual ne'er-do-wells were to receive nothing. The measure was enthusiastically welcomed by all Liberals, within and without the House. Nor was it altogether easy for the Conservatives to oppose; for they knew quite well how popular it was certain to be in the country; and Joseph Chamberlain, whom they professed to regard as something in the nature of an infallible oracle, had always advocated



it, and had never recanted. There was much shaking of heads on the Tory benches, and a good deal of muttering about corruption and prodigal expenditure; nevertheless, no serious opposition to the passage of the Bill was offered. Its rejection was moved by that consistent individualist, Mr. Harold Cox; and Sir Edward Carson, Sir William Anson, and Earl Percy supported him. Bonar Law, however, voted against the amendment. But Balfour, in the debate on the third reading, spoke disapprovingly of the measure, accusing it of both disappointing the hopes of those who had looked for a better scheme, and at the same time of crippling the nation's resources. He ended by disclaiming all responsibility for it, and conveyed what Lloyd George described as a "hint" to the House of Lords that they would do well to treat it as they had already treated so much other Liberal legislation in recent years.

The Lords, however, were too wily to allow themselves to be made scapegoats in a cause which they fully realised would be an intensely unpopular one. Lansdowne declared that he considered the arguments against Old Age Pensions to be "conclusive"; nevertheless, he did not recommend his fellow-Peers to reject the measure. Other noble lords pronounced jeremiads which would make one smile, but for the anger which they inevitably arouse in any decent mind. Lord Rosebery thought that "a scheme so prodigal of expenditure might be dealing a blow at the Empire which might be almost mortal". Ruskin, in a scathing passage written long years before, had pointed out the curious fact that the poor have a horror of pensions which the rich have not; and one indeed would have to search far and long to find anything quite so discreditable as these debates in which men, the vast majority of whom received every day of their lives for doing nothing as many pounds as the hard-working recipients of Old Age Pensions would

receive in a year, with nauseating hypocrisy deplored the ravages in the national character which would be caused by a policy which enabled hundreds of thousands of deserving poor to avoid the workhouse in their old age. Lord Lansdowne informed the Peers that he disliked the Bill because it wasted so much good money. The same money, he implied, could be used to wage a war; and a war would be profitable, whereas the pensions produced nothing. Nay, more, "a war," he said, "terrible as are its consequences, has, at any rate, the effect of raising the moral fibre of the country, whereas this measure, I am much afraid, is one which will weaken the moral fibre of the nation and diminish the self-respect of our people". But neither Balfour nor Lansdowne seemed particularly anxious to face a dissolution, and to go to the country with the cry: "No Pensions for the People. More Power for the Peers." Discretion in this case became the better part of valour; and the measure found its way to the Statute Book.

The Workmen's Compensation Act of 1906, and the Old Age Pensions Act of 1908, did things for our poorer classes which, without depriving themselves of the common necessities and decencies of life, they could not possibly have done for themselves. For whatever may be the case now, everybody is aware that thirty years ago no man belonging to the lower ranks of wage-earners could, even by a long life of incessant toil and scrupulous economy, lay aside money for the time when old age would have rendered further labour impossible. These two beneficent Acts proclaimed the sound principle that it is the duty of the more prosperous and fortunate members of the community to share the burdens of their poorer neighbours: it is the central core of the New Liberalism which was ever the governing passion of Lloyd George's life. The Workmen's

Compensation Act had made some provision, besides the workhouse, for the man who had suffered the misfortune of being deprived of the means of earning his livelihood in consequence of an accident. The Old Age Pensions Act provided for the needs—again outside the workhouse—of those who had become too old to work and to earn. It was much to have accomplished these two objects: but there remained the haunting spectres of sickness, and unemployment; and to the mitigating of those terrors the new Chancellor next began to direct his thoughts.

To read the debates which took place in both Houses of Parliament over the Old Age Pensions Bill, and to scan the pages of many of the contemporary newspapers, is to realise why the struggle between rich and poor raged so bitterly in the years which immediately preceded the Great War. We to-day, when we peruse the scathing diatribes contained in the speeches made by Lloyd George in those days, are tempted to regard them as inexcusably violent. Surely, we think, the wealthy were not so bad as he makes them out to be? Surely there was not on the part of the prosperous such a determination as he describes to keep the whole cake for themselves, jealously guarding the sources of wealth against intruders, and dividing the community into two eternally separate classes—"Rich" and "Poor"—each placed by God in its appointed place? Yet so to argue is an anachronism: it is to transplant the thoughts of this post-War world of ours into the very different order which existed in England down to 1914. Far other were the thoughts of 1909. The door is now open; and every year, Conservative Ministers carry through it measures for the benefit of our lame dogs which would have been execrated as hideously socialistic by Lord Lansdowne and Lord Rosebery: but when Lloyd George was Chancellor of the Exchequer that door was barred and

bolted ; and it did require something like the threat of revolution to cause it to move on its hinges.

Lloyd George was fully determined that the door of social and economic equality should be flung wide open ; and if honeyed words could not do it, then force would have to be employed. And when asked by his opponents to inform them where he would find money enough to pay for all those schemes of social reform, his light-hearted answer was that he was " looking for someone's hen-roost to rob ". It was, as he himself often admitted afterwards, an unfortunate phrase to have used. For years it haunted him ; and every proposal for a new tax which emanated from the fertile brain of the Chancellor was at once described by his critics as the robbing of another hen-roost. This much is clear : Lloyd George had now made up his mind that not only Conservatives, but the old school of Liberals as well, were incorrigible ; and quite deliberately he began to strip the gloves off his hands, and to prepare for battle. Ever since the rejection of Birrell's Education Bill by the Lords, he had favoured an appeal to the country on the veto issue ; but the rank-and-file Liberals in the House were antagonistic to such a course ; nor did King Edward approve of having the lists set for a serious struggle between the two legislative chambers. Now, however, the cup of the Peers' iniquity was surely full to the brim, so that just a little more would cause it to overflow ? Would a definitely " class " Budget bring about that desired consummation ? The Chancellor was just beginning to wonder !

But before next year's Budget need be framed, Lloyd George was anxious to pursue his inquiries into the provisions made in other countries for insurance against unemployment owing to sickness. Germany, he was told, had got such a scheme ; and thither he determined to go in order to examine its working on the spot. We have

already seen how, when he was preparing a plan for a re-organised Port of London, he paid a visit to all the leading seaports of the North Sea. Such procedure is characteristic of the man: he leaves nothing to chance, nothing to second-hand reports, when it is possible for him to see things for himself, and to receive explanations from the person actually in control. To Germany, then, he went; and from there to Austria and Belgium, concentrating chiefly upon the study of social legislation in those countries; but keeping also a wary eye on the international situation, for he knew only too well that if there was to be an increase of political tension between England and Germany, necessitating immense additional expenditure on armaments, there would be but little hope of his obtaining money for all these plans for social betterment upon which his hopes were set. The international situation, in fact, was growing rapidly worse. It was the year of Austria's annexation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, the manner of which gave mortal offence to Isvolsky, the Russian Minister, and the purpose of which was interpreted by Isvolsky's imperial master as a direct challenge to Russia's influence in the Balkans. France and Germany also were having one of their periodic minor rows; this time because the latter was harbouring deserters from the French Foreign Legion at Casablanca. Nerves were everywhere on edge; and the Kaiser seized the occasion to vent his grievances in the famous *Daily Telegraph* interview which caused so much annoyance to Prince Bülow, and which confirmed the opinion which was now coming to be held both at Windsor and in Downing Street, that the ruler of Germany was an impressionable, moody, and unreliable factor in world politics.

Such was the agitated international atmosphere at the moment when Lloyd George set out on his travels. The bombshell of the *Daily Telegraph* did not burst until the

autumn ; and when Lloyd George went to Germany in the summer, there was nothing more than the usual naval rivalry to cloud the cordiality of his reception. The welcome accorded him left, in fact, nothing to be desired. He was provided with every facility for studying the working of German social legislation. Those responsible for administering the laws met him in every town, and explained the details of the schemes to him. Lloyd George was immensely impressed, and he returned home filled with admiration. Surely, if this semi-despotic, and thoroughly aristocratic Continental state could care so well for the health and happiness of its poorer classes, a professedly democratic country like Great Britain ought to do even more? In fact, however, England was, in every way, far behind Germany in this respect. The Chancellor had interviewed employers and employed in every part of Germany ; and his inquiries had led him into rural areas as well as large towns, provincial cities as well as the capital. He was confirmed in his opinion that, for old people over seventy years of age, a non-contributory scheme of pensions was best. One of the purposes of his investigation was to discover whether a contributory scheme could eventually be grafted on to a non-contributory one in regard to invalidity and sickness. In Germany he discovered that employers and workmen were well satisfied with their contributory system ; and there was universal agreement that it had greatly raised the level of health and well-being throughout the empire.

The visit was a purely private one ; nevertheless, Bethmann-Hollweg, the Vice-Chancellor, cut short his holiday in order to travel to Bremen for the purpose of entertaining him at a public banquet. This gesture was typical of the friendliness with which he was everywhere received, by statesmen and officials, as well as by the common people.

Even the newspapers, so disposed in those inflammable days to fan the embers of controversy into fire, were on their best behaviour, and spoke, for the most part, in terms of cordiality of Great Britain.

Bethmann-Hollweg impressed Lloyd George as an attractive and arresting personality, intelligent, industrious, and sensible, but not in any way a great man. When a good dinner had been partaken of, and great tankards of beer had been passed round, he opened a conversation on foreign policy. As usual he complained of the encirclement of Germany. Lloyd George assured him that, so far as England was concerned, there was not the slightest desire to enter into any hostile combination against Germany, but that she wished only to live in peace and amity. But he candidly told him that the English people felt uneasy about the growth of the German Navy; and he then went on to point out that Britain's very existence depended upon her maintaining command over the sea. It was evident that the Vice-Chancellor was no big navy enthusiast; but quite obviously he had a genuine fear of this combination of England, France, and Russia; for again and again he repeated his complaint about the "iron ring". Finally he became very excited, and shouted loudly: "England is embracing France. She is making friends with Russia. But it is not that you love each other; it is that you hate Germany!" That England, France, and Russia did not love one another was abundantly true; but it was entirely false to suggest that there was any hatred of Germany in the England of 1908, save among a small group of permanent officials at the Foreign Office. There was certainly not a single member of the British Cabinet at the time who entertained any feeling save that of cordiality towards her. When still more good German beer had been consumed, Bethmann-Hollweg made it known to his guest that he

regarded England as decadent, its people as being no longer hard-working, but living solely for amusement and ease. Lloyd George seems to have been a good deal perturbed by the atmosphere of suspicion, and even hostility, where England was concerned, which he discovered to prevail in high places in Berlin. He was also set thinking by the behaviour of a crowd at Stuttgart, which had just witnessed the wrecking of a Zeppelin: there was an agony of grief and dismay, until pent-up feelings found vent in the fervid singing of "Deutschland über Alles". This powerful and patriotic folk, if led astray by the anti-British fanaticism of the soldiers and sailors, would indeed be a terrible enemy to face.

While on German soil Lloyd George gave no formal expression to his views on the relations between England and the country which was receiving him so hospitably; but when he reached Carlsbad, a representative of the Viennese newspaper—the *Neue Freie Presse*—succeeded in obtaining an interview. In the published report of this interview he was made to say that, although he did not suppose that an *entente* between England and Germany was possible at the moment, or even in the near future, yet it was his belief that the tension which was afflicting Europe so grievously could only be effectually ended by a cordial understanding between the two nations. "I believe", he declared, "that we must work for the conclusion of an *entente* between England and Germany in order that we may be able to devote ourselves wholly to the tasks of peace, of progress, and of social reform." Nevertheless, it made it plain that there could be no hope whatsoever of such an *entente*, nor even of the checking of the growing feeling of mutual hostility, unless naval rivalry could be laid aside; for he was as perfectly aware as any Germanophobe in the British Parliament that England would never



tolerate the greatest land power in Europe making itself the greatest sea power as well. Indeed, he plainly told his interviewer, England was fully determined to maintain the two-power standard. Both countries, he pointed out, were devoting millions of pounds every year to this futile and dangerous rivalry. Would it not be better (and here we see what was nearest his heart all the time) that the money, or at least a good part of it, should be directed to the purpose of enriching the lives of the people? Most emphatically did he repudiate the suggestion that King Edward was bent upon the encirclement of Germany. The King had gone to Reval, he declared, simply and solely to set a seal upon the liquidating of ancient differences between England and Russia which had been accomplished in the previous year. "There must be an end", he said, "to the evil game of setting England and Germany upon each other like two dogs." Finally, he castigated those newspapers in both countries which were for ever trying to excite suspicion and animosity, instead of trying to promote a friendly understanding.

This interview caused considerable stir in many quarters. In France it created much uneasiness; for French policy at the time was directed almost wholly to the detaching of England from Germany, and forcing her into an alliance with herself and Russia. Much excitement was also aroused in Germany and Austria; and while some maintained that England was again holding out the olive branch which had dropped from the hand of Joseph Chamberlain, others argued that this was but one more Machiavellian device intended to arrest the progress of Germany's new navy. At home in England the interview was praised or blamed according to whether its readers desired to see friendship established with Germany, or regarded such a consummation as already impossible. The holders of the

latter opinion were, in fact, rapidly coming to be in the ascendant—a catastrophe for which Sir Edward Grey must bear at least part of the blame. Radiating from the Foreign Office, where Germanophobes like Eyre Crowe were at work, a disastrous fatalism was beginning to permeate political circles. To postpone a war with Germany indefinitely, they maintained, was out of the question. War would inevitably come: and it was for England now to make certain that when the day did arrive, she would not be found without powerful allies. With that object in view, the understanding with France and Russia ought to be speeded up, and nothing left to chance. Grey did not go anything like so far as Nicolson and his supporters in his desire to burn the bridges between England and Germany. He lingered wistfully on the debatable ground between the rival sets of combatants, hoping that things would so turn out that he would be able in the hour of crisis to mediate between them, and so preserve the peace, not only for England, but for the whole of Europe. It was, as we know, an altogether vain hope; and it had been a vain one from the moment in which Grey authorised the holding of military conversations between the British and the French War Offices, a fact which had made it obvious to Germany that in the event of a war between herself and France, Great Britain would inevitably take her place at the side of the latter.

Most of what was going on behind the diplomatic scenes in these critical years was unknown to the ordinary British citizen and even to the average Member of Parliament. Indeed, it is obvious, if we are to accept their own word for it, that much was unknown to several Members of the Cabinet. No one dreams for a moment of accusing Grey of deception, nor of disbelieving him when he declares that every Foreign Office paper of importance was always

placed before each Cabinet Minister. At the same time it is quite clear that Grey did not go out of his way to enlighten all his colleagues with regard to the trend in the direction of a French alliance. On the contrary, what he did was to select two or three of his fellow-Ministers, men whom he knew sympathised with his own point of view, and make them his confidants. Grey rightly suspected that the Radical wing of his Party, in spite of the traditional love for France entertained by leaders of left-wing political thought, like John Morley, Dilke, Frederic Harrison, and even Gladstone, would have protested vigorously, even carrying their protest to the point of resignation, against anything remotely resembling a tipping of the balance in favour of one of the European armed camps rather than another, and still more against any suggestion of military commitments. And it is quite certain that the opposition to this partly secret policy of the inner Cabinet would have been led by Lloyd George, supported by an overwhelming majority of the Liberal rank and file both in the House of Commons and in the country.

But as Lloyd George has himself told in his *Memoirs*, he was but little interested in foreign affairs in his early political years. He had been set on his guard against the pro-French inclinations of Lansdowne (inclinations which were simply underlined by Grey when he became Foreign Secretary) by Lord Rosebery in 1904, when they were both members of the Liberal Opposition. "Well," said Rosebery to him, "I suppose you are just as pleased as the rest of them with this French agreement? You are all wrong. It means war with Germany in the end." Beyond a belief in the rights of small nationalities, a hatred of jingoism, a desire to reduce armaments, and a belief in arbitration, Lloyd George had no fixed creed in international affairs when he entered the Cabinet. He certainly had no

sympathy with blood-and-iron Bismarckism, with the military swagger of the Kaiser's empire, nor with the doctrine of might so sedulously proclaimed by all prominent Germans in the thirty years before 1914.

Before starting on his German tour, Lloyd George had had two lengthy conversations with Count Wolff-Metternich, the German Ambassador to England, at the suggestion of Sir Edward Grey himself; and at these interviews, the problem created by Germany's determination to build a great fleet had been thoroughly discussed. Both conversations were fully reported by Metternich to his Government, and in due course the reports were perused by the Kaiser. The Ambassador, apprised of Lloyd George's impending visit to Germany, had suggested that it would be an excellent thing for the Emperor to invite him to be his guest, since, as he put it, "he is one of the most outstanding personalities in England, and one who will most probably be called upon one day to stand at the head of a Liberal Government". But unfortunately the report of the London conversations had greatly angered the Kaiser and Prince Bülow; and the latter feared that, if his imperial master were to use in Lloyd George's presence the insulting words which he had applied to England in his marginal annotations of Metternich's report, there would be such an explosion as would ruin any chance which might be left of keeping the peace between two haughty nations. The invitation, consequently, was not sent.

From the level of high and acrid politics it is pleasant to descend to record two small matters of personal interest pertaining to Lloyd George's 1908 visit to Germany. The first is, that a German barber, with characteristic national efficiency, took such a toll of the famous locks that the Chancellor was hardly recognisable by his friends for many weeks after his return to England. The other

is that he then purchased the green cloak which has been his almost inseparable companion ever since; and with which hundreds of Press photographs have made the British public so abundantly familiar.

It has always been one of Lloyd George's chief titles to greatness as a statesman that he has been willing to learn, to discard obsolete views, and to keep abreast of changing times. The narrow Welshman had developed into the British patriot. An inevitable parochialism had given place to an intense interest in the affairs of the Empire. And now, when the light was beginning to play upon the European political scene, we see him slowly, but surely, ranging himself by the side of the Foreign Secretary; not in a policy of provocation (for Grey was as sincere a lover of peace as any man alive), but in a determination to stand firm where legitimate British interests were concerned. To that point of agreement he had developed by 1908: it took him longer to appreciate Grey's view that, in order to present any effective opposition to German hectoring, an understanding with France, and probably with Russia as well, must be secured; and further, that any such understanding must be valueless if not supported by concerted military and naval plans. Those who may feel disposed to blame Lloyd George for failing to perceive that fact, must also blame Austen Chamberlain, and all other believers in "regional pacts"; since the fatal weakness in all such plans for maintaining peace is that they rest upon no conceivably successful strategic foundations. The moment one begins to examine the Locarno Pacts from this standpoint, their absurdity becomes apparent.

In the matter of the Navy we see Lloyd George, in 1908, in process of transition. He was a whole-hearted advocate of disarmament, and would most joyfully have come to any understanding with Germany that left England's two-power

standard still unchallenged : but he had now come to realise that there must be no tampering with that margin of superiority. It was a hard conclusion for him to have arrived at, knowing full well, as he did, that an expensive programme of naval construction would encroach more and more upon those extensive schemes of social reforms which were now the principal interest of his political life. He had not ceased to hope that Germany, if we refrained from flaunting our superiority too aggressively, and did not add to the number of our ships beyond the annual necessary replacements, would respond to our appeal, and agree to naval limitation. Nothing, he thought, ought to be done to irritate Germany, with her vainglorious monarch, and her hypersensitive people ; and he felt very annoyed with Winston Churchill, even four years later, when practically the last hope of an agreement had been abandoned, for speaking of the German Navy as " a luxury ".

The Conservatives in the British Parliament viewed all the talk about naval limitation with profound suspicion. They felt convinced that a Liberal Cabinet, led by peace-mongers like Lloyd George, and interested less in the glory of England than in the well-being of the working classes, would betray the country, and concede too much to German pride. It was known that the Cabinet was divided over the question of the Naval Estimates ; and it was assumed that the sum eventually agreed upon would be inadequate. The Cabinet was, as a matter of fact, acutely alive to the real danger of the German bid for maritime supremacy ; but believed that four new battleships of the Dreadnought type, in addition to ships of other classes, would be amply sufficient for that year. Furthermore, the Government was asking for power, if the conduct of foreign nations seemed to render it advisable, to build four additional Dreadnoughts in 1910. Balfour, speaking for the Opposition, denounced

these proposals as utterly insufficient. He called for eight Dreadnoughts there and then. "We want eight, and we won't wait"—the Tory slogan at the Peckham by-election, soon became the battle cry of the whole Conservative Party. So fierce was the popular storm over the subject that the Government, themselves perturbed and anxious, and with dissension in their own ranks, decided to bow before it, and to build eight Dreadnoughts forthwith. As Winston Churchill has wittily put it: "A curious and characteristic solution was reached. The Admiralty had demanded six ships; the economists offered four, and we finally compromised on eight."

## CHAPTER ELEVEN

### THE PEOPLE'S BUDGET [1909]

WHEN the members of the wealthier classes almost without exception demanded the expenditure of vast sums upon the Navy, and when the magnates of the City of London solemnly met and petitioned the Government to spare nothing in the determination to make our naval position unchallengeable, the Chancellor of the Exchequer might not unreasonably have concluded that they were all perfectly willing, nay, even eager, to foot the bill. It did not occur to him that the rich men had in mind the paying for this additional insurance of their own property by depriving the poor of those social reforms, long overdue, which were now beginning to be regarded as just by the community. Lloyd George himself thought that the naval programme adopted was probably in excess of the requirements of the international situation, and even, in fact, calculated to irritate Germany, and to have the effect of inducing her to strain herself to the uttermost in the endeavour to win the race ; but he had perforce to accept it, since it appeared wise in the eyes of those of his colleagues who were principally responsible for our fighting services and our foreign policy. But in accepting it, he mentally resolved that the money would have to be obtained from some source other than that of the pockets of the poor. It was with that determination that the Chancellor approached the task of framing the Budget of 1909. Two principles stood out clearly in his mind : first, those who



could best afford to pay the additional taxes rendered necessary by the increase in naval expenditure must do so. Secondly, those who had the biggest stake in the country must be made to pay the heaviest insurance premium. His Conservative opponents invariably employed the "bigger stake" argument when they tried to make out a case for plural voting. But if the principle justified plural voting, it even more surely justified extra taxation. At all events, those hundreds of thousands of our people, already living on the margin of subsistence, with not a shilling to spare for even the smaller luxuries of life, must not be further impoverished even to the extent of a single penny. "When the Prime Minister did me the honour of inviting me to take charge of the National Exchequer, at a time of great difficulty, I made up my mind, in framing the Budget which was in front of me, that at any rate no cupboard should be barer, no lot should be harder. By that test I challenge you to judge the Budget." Those were the closing words of one of his most famous speeches, and they sum up his policy with perfect fairness.

Critics of the Budget used to make out that it was the irresponsible performance of an ignoramus in finance, thoroughly disapproved of by his Cabinet colleagues, and framed largely without their concurrence. It may be true that the majority of the Cabinet felt no enthusiasm for the new land taxes; but they had been given ample opportunity for discussing the proposals beforehand. "I do not believe", said Lloyd George, speaking in the debate on the third reading, "that there has ever been a Budget presented in this country which has been more carefully examined both before and after its introduction. I think I can say with sincerity that I do not believe a Chancellor of the Exchequer and his officials ever took a longer time over the preparation of a Budget before it was introduced,

and I am perfectly certain that no Cabinet ever subjected one to such a protracted examination." It was not so much the specific proposals contained in the 1909 Finance Bill which perturbed the Chancellor's colleagues—for in principle they had, one and all, either already been put in practice, or else advocated by Liberals of unimpeachable orthodoxy—but rather the fact that in Lloyd George's hands every proposal became a battle cry of the poor against the rich. Here was something which savoured of "class war"; and class war was held in as deep abhorrence by the average Liberal of 1909 as by the members of the Primrose League itself. After all, the majority of Liberal Members of Parliament themselves belonged to "the rich"; and they not unnaturally, perhaps, disliked the Chancellor's habit of putting wealthy folk in the dock, and especially the platform speeches in which he was always extolling the poor, and inciting them to rebellion against their lot in life. "Property" was something sacred in the eyes of every Whig; and the Liberals of the early twentieth century were far from having shaken off the legacy of superstitious veneration with which it was regarded. Almost all Lloyd George's Cabinet colleagues were members of "Society", either by birth or by adoption, many of them were themselves opulent, almost all of them consorted as a matter of course with the wealthy; and if not consciously, then certainly unconsciously, they resented the coming of the "cottage-born man", especially if he persisted through life in regarding the cottage as his spiritual home, and refused to ape the manners of the aristocracy. The "poor" were all very well as recipients of charity, State or private; but the thought of permitting them to dominate British politics was altogether repugnant. And holding the views they did, those who so fiercely assailed the Budget of 1909, and those who would have

liked to assail it but for fear of their constituents, were perfectly right; for in two respects it marked the first stage of a movement calculated to revolutionise our social system—viz. (1) It was the first real blow struck in the battle between poverty and wealth. (2) It was a serious beginning to an attempt at dealing with the abuses of our land system. Nor is it wonderful that the proposals should have been branded as socialistic, seeing that every one of them had been included in a resolution on national taxation, published by the Labour Party only a few months before; and that the Party, led by its ablest financier—Philip Snowden—had given the Budget the warmest of welcomes as a definite step in the right direction.

The Budget of 1909 may be considered under three aspects—as a body of financial proposals, as a crusade against the rich, especially the great landowners, and as a challenge to the House of Lords. How much of the third aspect had been foreseen by Lloyd George when framing his proposals, it is impossible to say. There is certainly no evidence for the charge that the whole thing, from start to finish, was simply a snare intended to trap the Peers. No member of the Cabinet could have had the faintest suspicion that the Lords would reject the Budget; and when they proceeded to do so, there was not only indignation, but also the most unaffected surprise. Nevertheless, we may no doubt fairly assume that the Chancellor was well pleased with the prospect of being able to initiate something of a social revolution under cover of that custom of the Constitution which lays it down that the Lords must not interfere with the exclusive right of the Commons to control taxation. For years a Liberal Government had been wasting its energies in the framing and debating of progressive measures, only to see them brought to naught through the action of the Upper House. How natural, then,

that the Chancellor should stretch, to the utmost limits possible, the protecting covering of a Money Bill, and seek to put on the Statute Book proposals which, in the form of ordinary Bills, would unquestionably share the fate of other Liberal legislative measures.

The famous Budget was opened on April 29th, 1909, to a House packed to its utmost capacity. Rumour had got about that the money required for the new ships was going to be obtained without any slackening of the Government's programme of social reforms; and Members rightly guessed that the new taxes would never be imposed by a Lloyd George upon the narrowest shoulders. The speech took four-and-a-half hours to deliver; and in the middle, the Chancellor's voice evinced such evident tokens of exhaustion that Balfour proposed the adjournment of the House for half an hour. As an artistic performance the speech does not rank very high: it certainly does not rival those wonderful financial expositions with which Peel, Gladstone, and even Asquith had charmed the House. It was far too diffuse, owing to the introduction of a vast amount of extraneous matter. The justification for its excursive character is, of course, that it was not a Budget speech at all in the proper sense of the term, but rather the opening shot in a great social campaign. It is possible that the actual financial proposals, even the new land taxes, might have been accepted with resignation if they had been presented in a matter-of-fact way by an unemotional business man, intent upon conveying the impression that there was nothing revolutionary about them. But Lloyd George obviously intended them to be provocative, to be regarded as the unfurling of a standard, and as the beginning of a social and constitutional struggle. His peroration to the Budget speech made that much quite clear. "This," he cried, "is a War Budget. It is for raising money to wage

implacable warfare against poverty and squalidness. I cannot help hoping and believing that before this generation has passed away, we shall have advanced a great step towards that good time when poverty, and the wretchedness and human degradation which always follow in its camp, will be as remote to the people of this country as the wolves which once infested its forests."

The fury aroused by this famous Budget has long since died down; and the proposals themselves, as we contemplate them to-day, seem inoffensive enough. Only an extra £14,000,000 had to be found; but it must be remembered that £150,000,000 Budgets, with income tax at one shilling in the pound, were still the accepted standards at the time, by both Liberal and Conservative Chancellors. Having regard to a fall in the revenue due to a steep trade depression, as well as to the additional money which had to be found to finance the new naval expenditure and the new social services, what it meant was that the Chancellor, in 1909, had to add about ten per cent to the national revenue. He shouldered the task with alacrity, and quickly made up his mind what classes of the community, and what interests, he would levy tribute upon. Much of the Budget followed long-familiar lines: the duty on spirits and tobacco was increased, as was also the liquor licence duty; death duties were augmented; income tax was brought up on a graduated scale to a shilling on incomes between £2,000 and £3,000, and one-and-twopence on those above that figure, while remaining at ninepence for "earned" incomes up to £2,000. Granting that the additional revenue had to be procured, no one could have done more, in view of these proposals, than utter the usual growls about crushing taxation, and the customary vaticinations about the inevitable collapse of industry: it was, however, a set of entirely new proposals which roused the

ire of all Conservatives, and which produced the fierce struggle with the Lords which ended in the Parliament Act.

To begin with there was to be a "supertax". It is true that it amounted only to sixpence, falling on incomes of more than £5,000 a year for such part of them as was in excess of £3,000. But the opulent fancied that they descried in the proposal a future threat to hold their property to ransom, and out of it to finance projects for the enrichment of the more numerous part of the electorate. Much worse (at all events in the eyes of the landed interest) was the proposal to tax the so-called "unearned increment", and to set on foot, in order so to do, a scheme of land valuation. Radical economists had been advocating this proposal for a generation or more. It seemed to them iniquitous and intolerable that a man, simply because he happened to be the owner of a piece of waste land contiguous to an expanding town should pocket high ground rents in respect of that land when it had been built upon, at other people's risk and expense, with houses and shops: at least he ought to be compelled to make a substantial contribution to the national revenues from rents so received. To all good Liberals it seemed self-evident that the community, which had created the wealth by its labour, should be entitled to take twenty per cent off his gains from the man who had merely looked on while other people were planning and working. It was a notorious fact that many peers were receiving incomes rising to hundreds of thousands of pounds a year from urban areas which had been purely agricultural land, with little or no intrinsic value, when they first granted leases of them. It was the community that had paid for the roads, constructed the drainage and water systems, built the houses, and thus created the trade which had given its enhanced value to such lands.

There were four new land taxes in the Budget: (1) A

tax of twenty per cent on increase in site value accruing after April 30th, 1909, payable whenever the property changed hands by sale or death. (2) A ten per cent reversion duty on the benefit accruing to a lessor through the determination of his lease. (3) An annual tax of a halfpenny in the pound on the site value of "undeveloped" land; that is to say, land destined for building, but held up for speculative purposes. (4) An annual tax of one shilling in the pound on the rental value of the right to work minerals. The estimated yield from all four taxes in the current year was only £600,000; but they were clearly of a kind that might be expected to expand enormously in years to come. Most important of all (at least in the eyes of the Chancellor himself) was the land valuation, which was to form the basis of the assessment of the tax on unearned increment. That, however, was the crowning enormity of the whole Budget in the opinion of landowners; for in their frightened imagination, they saw the twenty per cent tax mounting in future Budgets to a hundred per cent, until the land had, to all intents and purposes, been nationalised.

For forty-two days the Budget proposals were debated in the Commons, the Opposition contesting every line of every clause, and importing such acrimony into the discussions as had probably not been heard within the walls of Parliament in connection with any financial proposals since George Grenville's attempt to tax the American Colonies. Day after day Lloyd George stood up to confront his critics; and friends and foes alike marvelled no less at his physical endurance than at his mental resource. Most wonderful of all, perhaps, was his unfailing good humour. His House of Commons manner had, in fact, undergone a great change since the days of the old combats with Chamberlain, when all was rasping bitterness, and every weapon was dipped in poison. It was partly, no doubt, the

mellowing effects of age, recognition, and fame ; but also, in no small measure, the fact that for all the leading members of the Opposition in 1909—Balfour, Bonar Law, Austen Chamberlain, Walter Long, F. E. Smith—he entertained a genuine personal regard. Like every other Chancellor of the Exchequer he was obliged to bear the brunt of the fighting himself ; but it would be unjust to his colleagues, and particularly to Asquith, Grey, and Winston Churchill, not to admit that they gave him the most strenuous and valuable assistance when required. The entire Liberal and Labour Parties, in fact, stood loyally behind every clause of the Finance Bill. Among the usual supporters of the Government, the Irish Members alone occasioned some trouble by voting against the second reading, and abstaining on the third reading, owing to their dislike of the new duty on spirits. On November 4th, more than six months after its introduction, the Budget was carried by a majority of two hundred and thirty votes.

But long before the Commons had declared their final verdict on the Budget, the new taxes, in the country at large, had given rise to the most exciting platform warfare seen since Joseph Chamberlain's Radical campaign of 1885 ; and even his most famous speeches were easily surpassed by the series of orations which Lloyd George now delivered. Cold finance retreated into the background ; and in its place came a fierce and picturesque indictment of our social system in general, and of landlords in particular. With the denunciation of our land system went a scathing exposure of the iniquities of the mining royalties system, and of the claim of the Peers to block the way to Liberal legislation. In spite of their great majority in Parliament, the spirits of Liberals had begun to droop ; but his inspiring call to arms put new life into them. A " Budget League " was founded ; and antagonists of the Lloyd



George policy were not slow to retaliate with an "Anti-Budget League". The evils of the land monopoly, of those who reaped where they had not sown, of those who legislated without having been elected by the people, were the targets for Liberal missiles. On the other side, the half-baked proposals of a little attorney ignorant of the elements of finance, the wickedness of stirring up class strife, and the necessity in a sound political system for a strong Second Chamber, were the favourite themes.

It was not until the last day in November that the House of Lords rejected the Budget, thereby transforming the whole dispute into a fight for democratic government. Before that had taken place Lloyd George had made two outstanding speeches, the one at Limehouse, the other at Newcastle; both of which are supreme examples of his platform oratory in the best years of his life. In them we see his method of speaking in all its strength and in all its weakness. Models of platform oratory in the old style they certainly are not. They have not much form; the sentences are often slipshod; the diction is generally poor. Their most partial critic must allow that they are not great prose in the sense in which the best speeches of Bright, Rosebery, Asquith, Curzon, and Winston Churchill are. Nevertheless, if a speech is great in proportion to the immediate effect which it has upon the audience to which it is addressed, no one can deny that these, and many others of Lloyd George's platform orations during the succeeding years, are worthy of a place in the front rank. They are a mixture of conversation and rhetoric, abounding in homely touches, as well as in striking, and often extremely beautiful, metaphors. Above all, they are charged with passion: they come flaming from the speaker's heart, and they kindle the hearts of his auditors. The complaint that they are vulgarly abusive could never be

made save by a person who has never read them as a whole ; for granted that there are occasional lapses of taste, the invective which they contain is well within the limits of traditional political polemics. In particular, the Limehouse speech is proof of the truth of the proverb about giving a dog a bad name. For many people, " Limehouse " came to be synonymous with Billingsgate ; yet there is singularly little in the speech itself to justify any such aspersion. It was, of course, a novel thing for a duke to be held up to public ridicule by a Cabinet Minister ; but not all new things are bad of necessity. The root of the offence, of course, was that a person holding the exalted office of Chancellor of the Exchequer should have visited slum districts, and there, before poor audiences, voiced his contempt for the " higher orders ", and put the weight of his influence behind the discontent with which the indigent of the twentieth century were coming to regard the anachronisms of lordly titles and disproportionate incomes. In the interest of order and stability it was assumed to be the duty of a Minister of the Crown to pour oil on troubled social waters, and certainly to refrain from applying the bellows of his rhetoric to the sparks of discontent which lay about in more than sufficient plenty. But in the eyes of those who believed that there was much evil in the existing social system, who held that the rich were taking far more than their fair share out of the common national fund, who considered the land monopoly to be at the root of most of the ills, and who believed that the claims of the Peers to be allowed to mutilate and destroy legislation which had been carefully discussed, and accepted by large majorities, in the popular Chamber, was an intolerable outrage, it was certainly a good thing that a man should at last arise, endowed with enough eloquence, and with enough passion and courage, to wake the supine, and to

infuse some measure of healthy discontent into the millions who were satisfied to grumble in private, when they might, with only the effort of registering a vote, abolish all these abuses, and win a better position for themselves and their children. Consequently, for one section of the community Lloyd George came to be the symbol of all that is violent, predatory, and revolutionary; while for the other section he stood as the Heaven-given avenger of the wrongs of the poor, and the scourge of the tyrant and the monopolist.

The Limehouse speech was made on July 30th, 1909, before a crowded audience in a music-hall in one of the poorest parts of London. Its opening paragraph is an excellent example of the very conversational style which forms, as it were, the groundwork of even the most ornamental of Lloyd George's speeches. "A few days ago", he began, "a meeting was held not far from this hall, in the heart of the City of London, demanding that the Government should launch into enormous expenditure on the Navy. That meeting ended with a resolution promising that those who passed the resolution would give financial support to the Government in their undertaking. There have been two or three meetings held in the City of London since, attended by the same class of people, but not ending with a resolution to pay. On the contrary, we are spending the money, but they won't pay. What has happened since to alter their tone? Simply that we have sent in the bill. We started our four Dreadnoughts. They cost eight millions of money. We promised them four more; they cost another eight millions. Somebody has to pay; and then these gentlemen say: 'Perfectly true; somebody has to pay, but we would rather that somebody were somebody else!' We started building; we wanted money to pay for the building; so we sent the

hat round. We sent it round amongst workmen, and the miners and weavers of Derbyshire and Yorkshire, and the Scotchmen of Dumfries, who, like all their countrymen, know the value of money. They all dropped in their coppers. Then we went to Belgravia; and there has been such a howl ever since that it has wellnigh deafened us." Then the speech rises to the rhetorical plane: "But they say: 'It is not so much the Dreadnoughts we object to, it is pensions.' If they objected to pensions, why did they promise them? They won elections on the strength of their pensions. It is true they never carried them out. Deception is always a pretty contemptible vice, but to deceive the poor is the meanest of all. They go on to say: 'When we promised pensions we meant pensions at the expense of the people for whom they were provided. We simply meant to bring in a Bill to compel workmen to contribute to their own pensions.' If that is what they meant, why did they not say so? The Budget, as your chairman has already so well reminded you, is introduced not merely for the purpose of raising barren taxes, but taxes that are fertile, taxes that will bring further fruit—the security of the country which is foremost in the minds of all. The provision for the aged and deserving poor—wasn't it time something was done? It is rather a shame that a rich country like ours—probably the richest in the world, if not the richest the world has ever seen—should allow those who have toiled all their days to end in penury and possibly starvation. It is rather hard that an old workman should have to find his way to the gates of the tomb, bleeding and footsore, through the brambles and thorns of poverty. We cut a new path for him—an easier one, a pleasanter one, through fields of waving corn. We are raising money to pay for the new road—aye, and to widen it, so that 200,000 paupers shall be able to join

in the ranks." Then there followed a description of what the Government was doing, and hoped to do, for the unemployed through sickness. But the core of the speech was the part devoted to a defence of the new land valuation and taxation. Avoiding vague generalities, he proceeded to give instances of the great unfair pocketing of unearned increment, and the way in which the Budget would tax it. "Not far from here," he declared, "not so many years ago, between the Lea and the Thames, you had hundreds of acres of land, which was not very useful, even for agricultural purposes. In the main it was a sodden marsh. The commerce and the trade of London increased under Free Trade, the tonnage of your shipping went up by hundreds of thousands of tons, and by millions; labour was attracted from all parts of the country to cope with all this trade and business which was done here. What happened? There was no housing accommodation. This Port of London became overcrowded, and the population overflowed. That was the opportunity of the owners of the marsh. All that land became valuable building land, and land which used to be rented at £2 or £3 an acre, has been selling within the last few years at £2,000 an acre, £3,000 an acre, £6,000 an acre, £8,000 an acre. Who created that increment? Who made that golden swamp? Was it the landlord? Was it his energy? Was it his brains—a very bad look-out for the place if it were—his forethought? It was purely the combined efforts of all the people engaged in the trade and commerce of the Port of London—trader, merchant, shipowner, dock labourer, workman—everybody except the landlord. Now you follow that transaction. Land worth £2 or £3 an acre running up to thousands. During the time it was ripening, the landlord was paying his rates and his taxes not on £2 or £3 an acre. It was agricultural land; and because it

was agricultural land, a munificent Tory Government voted a sum of two millions to pay half the rates of those poor distressed landlords, and you and I had to pay taxes in order to enable those landlords to pay half their rates on agricultural land, while it was going up every year by hundreds of pounds through your efforts and the efforts of your neighbours. That is now coming to an end. On the walls of Mr. Balfour's meeting last Friday were the words: 'We protest against fraud and folly.' So do I. These things I tell you of have only been possible up to the present through the 'fraud' of the few and the 'folly' of the many. What is going to happen in the future? In future, those landlords will have to contribute to the taxation of the country on the basis of the real value—only one halfpenny in the pound! Only a halfpenny! And that is what all the howling is about. There is another little tax called the increment tax. For the future, what will happen? We mean to value all the land in the kingdom. And here you can draw no distinction between agricultural land and other land; for the simple reason that East and West Ham was agricultural land a few years ago. And if land goes up in the future by hundreds of thousands an acre through the efforts of the community, the community will get twenty per cent of that increment. Ah! What a misfortune it is that there was not a Chancellor of the Exchequer to do this thirty years ago! We should now have been enjoying an abundant revenue from this source." He then proceeded to give other instances, quoting Golder's Green, the Duke of Northumberland, the towns of Bootle and Richmond. His reference to the Duke of Northumberland is worth quoting, for it is typical of much of his argument in these Budget speeches. As will be seen by every fair-minded reader there is nothing unnecessarily offensive in the passage from start to finish:

"Take the very well-known case of the Duke of Northumberland, when a County Council wanted to buy a small plot of land as a site for a school to train the children who in due course would become the men labouring on his property. The rent was quite an insignificant thing; his contribution to the rates, I think, was on the basis of thirty shillings an acre. What did he demand for it for a school?—£900 an acre. All we say is this—if it is worth £900, let him pay taxes on £900." Concrete examples of indefensible profiteering of that kind proved far more eloquent than any mere denunciation would be, and it is little wonder that landowners who could not disprove the facts of the indictment recoiled from such an exposure, and vented their wrath upon its author.

The next topic to be dealt with was the new reversion tax. "What is the reversion tax?" he asked. "You have got a system in this country which is not tolerated in any other country in the world, except, I believe, Turkey—a system whereby landlords take advantage of the fact that they have got complete control over the land to let it for a term of years; somebody else spends money upon it in building; and year by year the value passes into the pockets of the landlord; and at the end of sixty, seventy, eighty, or ninety years, the whole of it passes away to the pockets of a man who never spent a penny on it. [Here follow concrete examples of leases in practice.] Look at all this leasehold system. This system—it is the system I am attacking, not individuals—is not business, it is blackmail." Next he turned to the new tax on royalties, and again adopted the method of quoting instances, the facts of which were well known. "In the very next colliery to the one I descended just a few years ago, three hundred people lost their lives by fire. And yet when the Prime Minister and I knock at the door of those great landlords,

and say to them: 'Here, you know these poor fellows who have been digging up royalties at the risk of their lives, some of them are old, they have survived the perils of their trade, they are broken, they can earn no more. Won't you give something towards keeping them out of the workhouse?' They scowl at us, and we say: 'Only a ha'penny, just a copper.' They say: 'You're thieves', and they turn their dogs on us, and you can hear their barks every morning. If this is an indication of the view taken by those great landlords of their responsibility to the people, who, at the risk of life create their wealth, then I say their day of reckoning is at hand." Then after a few more arguments in defence of the new taxes on the rich as a whole, the speech came to an end with one of those short, eloquent perorations which, in the days before the War, when Lloyd George was rightly regarded as the most doughty champion that the downtrodden of this country had ever possessed, never failed to bring the audience, shouting in frantic exultation, to its feet. "We are placing burdens on the broadest shoulders," he cried. "Why should I put burdens on the people? I am one of the children of the people. I was brought up amongst them. I know their trials; and God forbid that I should add one grain of trouble to the anxieties which they bear with such patience and fortitude. When the Prime Minister did me the honour of inviting me to take charge of the National Exchequer at a time of great difficulty, I made up my mind in framing the Budget which was in front of me, that at any rate no cupboard should be barer, no lot should be harder. By that test I challenge you to judge the Budget." Reading this much-maligned speech to-day, it is difficult to understand how it was that it roused such a tempest of resentment. There is no vituperation in it, no personalities of an offensive character, no incitement to



the lower classes to take the law into their own hands, and deal violently with the property of the wealthy. It is simply a cogent, trenchant, graphic, and perfectly fair presentation of a particularly strong case.

The other speech of the Budget campaign which acquired a notoriety comparable with that of the Limehouse utterance was the one which Lloyd George delivered at Newcastle on October 9th. A phrase from its peroration, about "rare and refreshing fruit", became a stock gibe in the Opposition polemical armoury for years, especially when they happened to be showing how meagre, in fact, was the harvest produced by the land taxes. Even more than the Limehouse speech, the Newcastle speech indulges sparingly in rhetoric. It is conversational and persuasive, consisting for the most part of the facts and figures of concrete cases illustrative of the abuses which the new Budget taxes were intended to cure. By October, however, when the Newcastle speech came to be delivered, the threat that the House of Lords would reject the Budget was being freely uttered; and although Ministerialists professed to regard such an event as beyond the bounds of credibility, Lloyd George nevertheless took the opportunity to convey a stern warning to the Peers. A few extracts from this speech again will serve better than any description to give an accurate impression of what Lloyd George's platform speaking was like in this period, when he was the Moses or Joshua of Liberal panegyrics, and the Jack Cade of Conservative invective.

"A Minister in charge of a great Bill", he quietly began, "has no time to prepare speeches, and I have not come here to deliver a speech. I have just come here for a plain, straight talk about the Budget, the opposition to it, and the prospects of both. It is six years since I had the privilege of addressing a gathering in Newcastle, and I have

some recollection that I then dwelt upon the great burden imposed upon industry by ground landlords and the royalty owners, and I then mildly suggested that it was about time they should contribute something out of their wealth towards the necessities of the State. I come here to-day, six years afterwards, to tell you that it will be done, and in a few years." There followed a brief and clear account of the new taxes. After a reference to the way in which trade had recently been recovering, in spite of the heavy blow which the Budget was said to have dealt it, he indulged in one of his flings at the Peers: "I understand investments have been steady, and there has been, on the whole, an improvement even in brewery shares. Only one stock has gone down badly—there has been a great slump in dukes. . . . The dukes have been making speeches recently. One especially expensive duke made a speech, and all the Tory Press said: 'Well, now, really, is that the sort of thing we are spending £250,000 a year upon?' Because a fully-equipped duke costs as much to keep up as two Dreadnoughts; and they are just as great a terror, and they last longer." Two classes of people, he went on to say, were objecting to the Budget—the Tariff Reformers, who wanted the additional revenue to be obtained by taxing the food of the poor, and the big landlords. The poor, however, were just beginning to realise their own condition and their own power; and they were determined that the new burdens must be put upon the broadest shoulders. "They are asking for more air, more light, more room, more verdure, more sunshine, to recruit energies exhausted in toil; and they will get it. I believe this Budget will help them to get it."

The Chancellor next went on to deal with the need for land valuation. "The chief objection of great landlords to this Budget lies in the fact that it has great valuation

proposals. Why do they object to valuation? Well, I will tell you why. It goes to the very root of all things in the land question. There has never been a public undertaking in this country, municipal, State, or industrial, there has never been an enterprise but that the landlord has personally secured anything from four to forty times as much for the value of the land as its agricultural price." Quoting railway rates as an example of the way in which the toll paid to the landowner enormously raised the price, he went on: "I went into it very carefully in hundreds of these cases, and I found in the end that it was not the Railway Companies that were to blame. They had had to pay for every yard of land they had used, and often fifty times its real value. . . . That is what happens. There is not a railway train—goods, luggage, or passenger—in which there is not one truck carrying interest on the excessive prices paid to the landlords."

Then followed a reference to the same abuse in the case of municipalities: "Take municipalities. If you want land for any public purpose—a school in which to train children—I can see you have a case in your mind. I never heard of it. Wherever you go you get the same sort of interjection. They at once think you are referring to some local thing that has happened; and so you are. You cannot go to a single locality where you do not get cases: schools where the future citizens of the Empire are being trained, water works, gas, electricity, anything you want land for, alive or dead, you have got to pay for it four times as much as its agricultural value to these great landlords. Start analysing the rates of any great city, and you will be surprised how much is attributable directly to the excessive prices paid by municipalities for land for purposes which are essential to the very life of the city, to the very life of a civilised community." At this point there followed

some concrete examples of this monstrous abuse, one or two of which it would be well to quote: "I will take you first of all on a trip to my own country, which is quite interesting, I can assure you. Some of you may know the South Wales coalfields. It is not long ago since it was a very wild, unproductive country, most of it common land. Landlord Parliaments soon handed over the property to the great landlords when they discovered there was mineral value in it. At the present moment the South Wales coalfield pays a million-and-a-half per annum in royalties to a few landlords, and in ground rents hundreds of thousands of pounds.

"Let me give you just one or two figures which will show what is done there. You get first of all land not very rich; agricultural land, rather poor agricultural land, where coal is discovered. The landlord leases the property to somebody who has the necessary enterprise and capital for purposes of development. The landlord himself does not sink any capital in these properties, except in rare instances. Somebody else does that; somebody else faces the risks of a loss; and the landlord takes sixpence a ton in the way of royalties.

"What happens when you come to the surface? You must employ workmen for the purpose of carrying on your mining operations, and the workmen must have homes. So they start building, and the landlord then says: 'Yes, certainly, by all means you may build, but you must pay a ground rent.' There is land now leased in these valleys in South Wales which, within living memory (it may be only a few years ago in some cases) produced only a shilling an acre, where the landlord is now getting £30 and £40 per acre per annum, simply for the permission to build a few cottages upon it. They are able to build on lease; and in about sixty years the whole of this land will fall into the

landlord's hands. Take the Rhondda Valley—it is one of the greatest coalfields in South Wales. In the year 1851, the total population of the valley was only a thousand. To-day the population is 132,000. The landlords receive annually £200,000 in royalties. They received £30,000 a year in ground rents. The colliery proprietors there pay in rates £54,000 a year. The landlords do not pay a penny. That is how the matter stands there. They charge for the minerals; they charge for the surface; wherever land is wanted for water works they charge heavy prices for it; railways have to pay; and between all these charges industry is burdened and the landlords do not contribute a penny towards the heavy and growing rates of the district. And when I come along and say: 'Here, gentlemen, you have escaped long enough, it is your turn now; I want you to pay just five per cent'—'Five per cent?' they say to me, 'you are a thief; you are worse, you are an attorney; worst of all, you are a Welshman.' That is always the crowning epithet. Well, gentlemen, I do not apologise; I could not help it, and I do not mind telling you that if I could I would not. I am proud of the little land among the hills. But there is one thing I should like to say. Whenever they hurl my nationality at my head, I say to them: 'You Unionists! You hypocrites! Pharisees! You are the people who in every peroration—well, they have only got one—always talk about our being one kith and kin throughout the Empire, from the old man of Hoy in the north down to Van Diemen's Land in the south. And yet, if any man dares to aspire to any position, who does not belong to the particular nationality which you have dignified by choosing your friends from, you have no use for him.' Well, they have got to stand the Welshman this time. . . . When the Celt has a nail in his boot he takes it out. But you have been marching on until there is a sore. Have it out."

After a few more illustrations, taken this time from Yorkshire, the Chancellor proceeded to his warning to the House of Lords to consider carefully what rejecting the Budget would mean; and from that to his peroration: "Well, now, we are going to send the Bill up—all the taxes or none. What will the Lords do? I tell you frankly it is a matter which concerns them far more than it concerns us. The more irresponsible and feather-headed amongst them want to throw it out. But what will the rest do? It will depend on the weather. There are some who are not fairweather sailors, and they will go on. But poor Lord Lansdowne—with his creaking old ship and his mutinous crew—there he is, he has got to sail through the narrows with one eye on the weatherglass and the other on the forecastle. . . . But still this is the great Constitutional Party; and if there is one thing more than another better established about the British Constitution, it is this, that the Commons, and the Commons alone, have the complete control of supply and ways and means; and what our fathers established through centuries of struggle, and of strife—even of bloodshed—we are not going to be traitors to.

"Let them realise what they are doing. They are forcing a revolution, and they will get it. The Lords may decree a revolution, but the people will direct it. If they begin, issues will be raised that they little dream of. Questions will be asked which are now whispered in hushed voices, and answers will be demanded then with authority. The question will be asked, whether five hundred men, ordinary men chosen accidentally from any of the unemployed, should override the judgment—the deliberate judgment—of millions of people who are engaged in the industry which makes the wealth of the country. That is one question. Another will be: Who ordained that a few shall have the land of Britain as a perquisite? Who made ten thousand

people owners of the soil, and the rest of us trespassers in the land of our birth? Who is it that is responsible for the snobbery of things whereby one man is engaged through life in grinding labour to win a bare and precarious subsistence for himself, and when, at the end of his days, he claims at the hands of the community he served a poor pension of eightpence a day, he can only get it through a revolution; and another man, who does not toil, receives, every hour of the day, every hour of the night whilst he slumbers, more than his poor neighbour receives in a whole year of toil? Where did the table of that law come from? Whose finger wrote it? Those are the questions that will be asked. The answers are charged with peril for the order of thought the Peers represent; but they are fraught with rare and refreshing fruit for the parched lips of the multitude who have been treading the dusty road along which the people have marched through the dark ages which are now merging into the light!"

So ends this great speech; for great it is in virtue of its direct simplicity, its gleams of real eloquence; above all, its perfect adaptation to the ends in view. It, and its fellows, stirred the slugged blood of the British working man as nothing had done since Chamberlain's great speeches in 1885, and won for Lloyd George an unrivalled position as the tribune of the people. Some of his colleagues might shrug their shoulders; but they had the sense to know what would win the allegiance of the people; and to see that if the Liberal Party did not succeed in doing so, and doing so without a year's delay, the Labour Party would. It is only fair to state that men like Asquith and Grey, whose own style of oratory was as different from that of Lloyd George as anything very well could be, were fully appreciative of the peculiar excellence of these speeches, and of their immense value from the point of view of Liberal propaganda.

Nor had Asquith any doubt at all concerning the essential justice of the new taxation. On that point we have his own clear declaration, made long afterwards when the dust of battle had finally subsided, and when his dispassionate mind could weigh all the arguments for and against in the balance. "It was the land taxes," he wrote, "and perhaps still more the proposed valuation of land, which 'set the heather on fire'. Their immediate yield was estimated to be very small, but the alarmists saw in them a potential instrument for almost unlimited confiscation. Being supposed myself to be a financier of a respectable and more or less conservative type, I was, in the course of the debates, frequently challenged by Mr. Balfour and others to defend the new imposts, and especially the Undeveloped Land and the Increment Duties. I have undertaken in my time many more intractable dialectical tasks, and though I was fully alive to the mechanical difficulties involved, and perhaps not so sanguine as some of my colleagues as to the progressive productiveness of the taxes, I had never any doubt as to their equity in principle. The Increment Duty, in particular, applied only to the enhancement in the value of land which is not due to any enterprise or expenditure on the part of the owner, but to the growth, and often to the actual expenditure of the community. 'Upon that added value' (I argued) 'it is consistent with natural justice, with economic principle, and with sound policy, that the State should from time to time levy toll.' " This unequivocal endorsement of the most controversial of the Budget proposals, made by Asquith some fifteen years afterwards, is surely evidence enough to disprove the foolish gossip which gained currency, to the effect that a disapproving Cabinet had to look on impatiently while a wild and ignorant Chancellor of the Exchequer indulged in vindictive and predatory finance, owing to the fact that his mastery of



demagogic arts made him too formidable a person to quarrel with. But though the Cabinet might approve, there were, no doubt, many Englishmen who hated nothing so much as the mere suggestion of the existence of a difference of interest between rich and poor, and who had a not unnatural repugnance to being compelled to answer the kind of interrogatories put to them in the peroration of the Newcastle speech; and such persons were deeply mortified, and moved to almost ungovernable wrath. Every conceivable derogatory epithet was hurled at the Chancellor. One peer declared prettily that he would like to see him thrown among twenty couple of hounds. "Demagogue", "incendiary", "thief", "little Welsh attorney", were a few of the more usual and milder terms of abuse. Even the King felt moved to join in the chorus of censure. Needless to say, it was not against the taxes that the monarch protested: King Edward was far too scrupulous a constitutionalist to interfere in any way with matters of policy already decided by his Ministers. What annoyed him was the provocative utterances of the Chancellor, which seemed to his mind to be intentionally designed to bait the Peers, and to bring them, if possible, into collision with the representatives of the people. It was, in fact, the same old complaint, formerly made when Campbell-Bannerman was Prime Minister, that a member of the Cabinet was employing undignified language, was referring too lightly to such grave matters as revolution, and was even inciting the masses to make war upon the propertied and titled classes. This time it was to Asquith that the King addressed the admonition; for he firmly adhered to the view that a Minister must communicate with his Sovereign only through the Head of the Government. The King begged the Premier to use his influence with the Chancellor, whose platform language he roundly described as "Billingsgate".

Lloyd George invariably received these royal rebukes with exceeding good humour. He would promise (no doubt with a twinkle in his eye) to sin no more; and the promise would be faithfully kept until he next stood before an excited audience, with a tempting array of dukes simply offering themselves as targets for his satire and his venom. Occasionally he would affect not to see where his trespass lay; and much to Asquith's amusement, he claimed that the Newcastle speech was a model of moderation, declaring with undoubted sincerity that in his judgment the situation fully justified the use of language far more scathing than any employed by him. Asquith endeavoured to assuage the royal displeasure, while at the same time loyally putting in a word for his colleague. The King, however, was in earnest; and through his secretary he begged the Prime Minister not to "pretend" that he liked Mr. Lloyd George's speeches, since the King simply did not believe it, and was only irritated when an attempt at defence was made.

But although pretty clearly biassed in favour of the Peers, the King was far too wise a man to approve of the course which they were threatening to take with regard to the Budget. Throughout his brief reign he had watched with growing anxiety the development of the quarrel between the two Houses. He knew perfectly well that resentment at the rejection of Liberal measures by a permanent Tory majority entrenched in the House of Lords was not confined to extreme democrats like Lloyd George, but was felt just as keenly by men with a more moderate and traditional political outlook, such as Gladstone, Harcourt, Campbell-Bannerman, Rosebery, Asquith, Morley, and Grey. Party, and even more, class bias, and passion, were now blinding the opponents of the Budget; but the King, from his more detached point of view, could clearly see that to add

to the crime of rejecting practically every important Liberal measure that came to them from the Commons, the further enormity of trespassing upon the elected Chamber's undisputed control over taxation, would be to make a fight to a finish between the two Houses inevitable. In October he summoned Asquith to Balmoral, in order to talk over the situation with him. He inquired whether the Prime Minister would have any objection to his bringing pressure to bear upon the Tory leaders. Asquith replied that in his belief the King would, by so doing, be acting strictly within his constitutional rights. The King then said that he would certainly see Balfour and Lansdowne and put the matter strongly to them. But suppose they were to demand a *quid pro quo*, what was he to say? Might he promise them a dissolution of Parliament? To that Asquith replied that he could never agree to a dissolution in advance of the passing of the Budget, as that would be tantamount with conceding the most important of the points at issue—viz. the claim of the Lords, by rejecting the Finance Bill, to force a dissolution on the Crown.

Despite the fact that he had obtained no *quid pro quo* from the Prime Minister to offer to them, the King did summon the Conservative leaders to the Palace. The Sovereign's arguments, however, failed to convince Balfour and Lansdowne. By that time, in fact, popular feeling in the Conservative ranks had risen to such a point that conciliation was hardly possible.

## CHAPTER TWELVE

### COMMONS VERSUS LORDS [1910]

WITH the rejection of the Budget by the House of Lords, the purely financial question became merged in the greater constitutional issue of the sole right of the Commons to deal with all matters pertaining to taxation. And with the emergence of this dominating constitutional issue, the part played by Lloyd George became subordinate to that played by the Prime Minister. His speeches during the election campaign of January, 1910, were, it is unnecessary to say, an asset of incalculable worth to his Party; while his fixed determination not to yield profoundly affected the issue in a Cabinet which contained at least a few individuals who were reluctant to challenge the House of Lords openly and sharply on so clearly defined a question as the rejection of the Budget. Nevertheless, it was Asquith's superb generalship which planned the whole campaign; and planned it was, without one single slip or flaw. It may well be doubted whether Lloyd George, with his more impulsive ways, his proneness to be extreme in utterance, his liability to irritate and provoke his antagonists, and his much more slender equipment of constitutional law, could have led the Liberal hosts to final victory with so sure a step. Asquith won a complete triumph; and he did so without shedding a single Cabinet colleague, without losing the support of a single Liberal, without offending either of the two monarchs who reigned during the struggle, and without doing the slightest damage

to the respect which all the people of this country felt for ancient constitutional law and practice. It was a fine achievement; and in itself it entitles Asquith to a place in the front rank of our statesmen.

We have seen how King Edward endeavoured, though privately, to persuade the leaders of the Conservative Party not to throw down the gauntlet to their opponents by rejecting the Budget. Left to themselves, it is likely enough that Balfour and Lansdowne would have agreed to pass the odious Bill, consoling themselves with the reflection that on their own return to power it would be easy to repeal all its objectionable parts. For two reasons, however, they were no longer free agents. First, the immensely powerful body of landowners, who constituted the foundation of Conservatism, were determined to fight it out to the bitter end, and to insist that the House of Lords should throw out the Budget. Secondly, the Tariff Reformers were throwing all their influence into the same scale; for they realised that, if the new taxes were to turn out as productive as the Chancellor declared that they would, the case for a drastic review of our fiscal system would be greatly weakened. Would the people be persuaded to try and tax the elusive "foreigner" when there were so many of Lloyd George's "dukes" so much nearer home, and so much easier to deal with? Consequently, in spite of the emphatic advice of men like Cromer, Balfour of Burleigh, Rosebery, St. Aldwyn, and James of Hereford—all of whom detested the Budget, but were afraid of what might happen if the Peers were to throw it out—the vast majority of the Party decided to take Lord Milner's advice, to reject the Budget, and "damn the consequences".

A famous *Punch* cartoon depicted the hilarity which prevailed in the Cabinet when the news reached them of

this latest, and least excusable, blow at democracy delivered by the House of Lords. Ministers may not have felt quite so light-hearted as the witty artist would have us believe ; but they certainly did realise with relief and gladness that the Peers, at last, had sealed their own doom. Lloyd George did not attempt to disguise his satisfaction : " Their greed ", he declared, " has overcome their craft, and we have got them at last." Less exuberant men, like Asquith and Grey, knew that a stiff fight still lay in front of them ; and that every care would have to be taken, since a single false step might put them wrong with the electorate, and bring back a Tory Government in triumph.

The Government's first response to the challenge was to place a resolution before the House of Commons, declaring " the action of the House of Lords in refusing to pass into law the financial provisions made by this House for the service of the year " to be " a breach of the Constitution and a usurpation of the right of the Commons ". And when this resolution had been carried Parliament was at once dissolved. There were a few weak-kneed Liberals who would have been content, if they had secured a majority at the Election, to pass the Budget, and then interfere no further with the House of Lords : that is to say, make quite certain that the right of the Commons to exclusive control over finance should be vindicated, but say nothing about those powers of veto which had been employed to destroy a whole series of important Liberal measures between 1906 and 1909. The vast majority of the Party, however, rejected such pusillanimous advice with scorn, declaring that, since things had been brought to such a pass, a general reckoning over the whole field of controversy between the Houses would have to be arrived at. In concrete terms what that meant was : (1) The Budget must be forced down the reluctant throats of the Peers. (2) The veto of the

House of Lords over general legislation must be abolished or at least curtailed. The second of these purposes implied the Parliament Act. When Members departed for their constituencies there were many among them who thought that the Prime Minister, who had used certain vague and rhetorical phrases about "safeguards", had obtained in advance from the King a promise to create enough new Peers to overcome all possible resistance to such a measure. But as both Asquith and Lloyd George made clear in their election speeches, such a course would have been grossly unconstitutional, and consequently out of the question. Obviously the King could not be asked any such question in advance. As a matter of fact the King had intimated to the Prime Minister that he would not be prepared to use his prerogative until the question of the Lords' veto had been put specifically to the country at a second General Election. When news of the correct state of affairs transpired, there was much disappointment among the Liberal rank and file, and especially among the Irish Nationalists, who saw the great barrier to Home Rule retained in its place for an indefinite period. And since in the new Parliament the Irish Party held the scales, and could at any moment turn out the Government, their hostility had always to be reckoned with.

The General Election was fought in January, 1910. On the Liberal side, every effort was made to focus attention on to the one dominant issue—the unconstitutional behaviour of the Lords. But a referendum is alien to all our political traditions; and the campaign ranged, in fact, over the whole stock-in-trade of the four Parties. The Budget, with all its benefits for the poor man, was extolled to the skies by Ministerialists. Tariff Reform was painted in no less glowing colours by the Opposition, and the Budget denounced as an infamous swindle. The Prime Minister

delivered a series of speeches which kept rigidly to the main issue and which remain to-day as the most luminous and exhaustive statements of the constitutional position which we possess.

As usual the Conservatives of the Caernarvon Boroughs decided to oppose Lloyd George; and this time their candidate was Mr. Vincent, a local solicitor. In the average English constituency, he would have been a strong candidate; but in a thoroughly Welsh county like Caernarvon, he could expect but little support. The Conservatives in the Welsh parts of the Principality were amazingly slow to realise the fact that for a Churchman and an Englishman, representing in the eyes of the people the foreign garrison in their midst, to come forward as a candidate, was simply to court sure defeat. It is very doubtful whether in Wales at that time, a Conservative, if he had been a good Welshman and Nonconformist, would not have defeated a Liberal, if the latter happened to be an Englishman and a Churchman. Nation and religion still counted far more than politics in the Principality. Lloyd George felt justifiably secure, and consequently devoted but little time to his own constituency. For the most part, he toured England and Wales, speaking in the big centres of population, and for Liberal candidates whose seats were deemed to be unsafe. He was, without doubt, the popular hero of the hour, and his visits were in the nature of triumphal progresses. Very often he saved time by travelling about in a special train; and at such times, every wayside station would be packed with excited people, friends and foes alike, eagerly expecting him to speak a few words, or at least to smile and bow as the train steamed slowly past. Frequently the train, consisting of a single saloon carriage and an engine, would slow down at the platform; the smiling face, framed in the long hair which by then was rapidly turning white,



would be seen at the window; two or three of those short sentences, with the emotional appeal which he knew so well how to make, would be uttered—then the train would steam on into the night. Not in all places, however, was he received as a benefactor of humanity. In Grimsby, for example, his opponents mustered in such numbers, and with such obviously hostile intent, that he was obliged to leave the hall by a back entrance, surrounded by a strong police escort, to walk down a drain cutting, and finally to climb a wall into the railway station. But while there were still some people, other than dukes, who thirsted for his blood, there were multitudes who would gladly have laid down their lives for his sake. Save for the brief hour of Allied victory in 1918, when an unnatural, and wholly ephemeral, popularity fell to his lot, Lloyd George never rose so high in popular favour as he did in that year 1910. It was, without question, the peak year of his life. After that, his reputation, for reasons into which we shall have carefully to inquire, began slowly, but certainly, to decline among his own people, whether we mean by "his own people" his Welsh fellow-countrymen, his fellow-Nonconformists, or his fellow-Radicals. The Great War, and the first two years of the post-War period, brought him a new popularity, but it was with other, and very different, people. His estrangement from his true supporters—the old supporters who had fought at his side in the great political fights between 1900 and 1910—was complete and final; and when (as was only to be expected) the rootless affection of the new friends of 1918 was soon turned into enmity, he was left, politically speaking, alone in the world.

But the dark days of loneliness, separation, and frustration could not have been foreseen in January, 1910. The present was enthusiastically with him; and his

constituents returned him to Parliament with a majority of 1,078. No one had expected that the Liberal Party would win, in the country as a whole, a victory comparable with that of 1906; for in that astonishing election everything was in their favour—the staleness of the Government, the inevitable swing of the pendulum, the serious divisions in the Ministerial camp, and the unpopularity of Tariff Reform. In January, 1910, it was the Liberal Government that was stale; it was the Conservative Party in whose favour the pendulum would move; and Tariff Reform had lost at least some of its unpopularity. Moreover, against the Government were arrayed all the forces of the landed interest, the owners of property generally, the liquor trade, and the entire mass of people who are so easily frightened by talks which savour to them of "Socialism". At the same time it is just a little surprising that the man in the street did not respond more enthusiastically to the principles enshrined in the Budget, or react more violently against the challenge to his own political power implied in the action of the House of Lords. Lloyd George finance may, or may not, have been just and statesmanlike; but it unquestionably was for the benefit of the poorer classes of the community. That those classes did not support it to a man is a riddle which it is very difficult to solve. This at least is certain: the working classes of Great Britain have never since had so good an opportunity for bringing about drastic changes in their own favour in our social and economic order as the one which was within their grasp in 1910; and which hundreds of thousands of them carelessly flung away. When the results of the General Election were known, it was seen that the Government had a majority of 124; though in that majority the Irish Members had to be reckoned. Both sides were disappointed: the Ministerialists, who felt that the people ought to have supported them

more loyally on such a democratic programme; and the Opposition, who had felt certain that Tariff Reform, as an alternative to class legislation, would carry the day.

The Parliamentary situation was full of perplexity for Government and Opposition alike. When the latter had allowed the Peers to throw out the Budget, they were gambling upon securing a victory in the election which they knew would have to be held. But now the other side had triumphed; and it was fairly certain, not only that the Budget would after all have to be passed, but that something would also be done to deprive the House of Lords of its general veto; in which case the Conservative Party would be losing their most valuable security against Liberal legislation. Ministerialists, however, were in hardly better case. They were dependent on the Irish vote; and that vote had been registered against the second reading of the Budget. Could the Budget be carried despite the defection of such unfaithful allies? And looking beyond the Budget, what was to be done about the House of Lords? Some were in favour of leaving its composition unchanged, its right of veto only being destroyed. Others desired to reform it, and to convert it into a democratic Second Chamber, leaving its powers intact. A third party wished both to reconstitute it, and to deprive it of its veto. Which of these courses was the right one to adopt? It was when it came to giving a practical answer to this question that Asquith's logical and far-seeing mind proved of such inestimable service to his Party. For him, the course was clear: First, the Budget must be passed by both Houses. Second, the power of veto must immediately be curtailed, and rendered suspensory only. Third, reform of the House of Lords must be indicated, but need not at present be proceeded with. There can be little doubt that, if the Irish had had good reason for believing that

Ministers only intended to push the Budget through, and afterwards to embark upon the uncharted sea of House of Lords reform, they would have turned the Government out of office without delay. Asquith, while flatly refusing to give anything in the nature of a pledge to the Irish, soon made it clear that veto, and not reform, was to be the order of the day; and once assured of that, Redmond persuaded his followers that the cause of Home Rule could only be made to prosper by their voting for the Budget.

By the end of March, the Cabinet had agreed upon its House of Lords policy: it was to take the form of Suspensory Veto; which meant that a Bill would automatically become law, without the consent of the Upper House, if passed in three successive sessions, spread over a minimum of two years, by the House of Commons. It was further to be definitely enacted that over measures certified by the Speaker to be Money Bills, the Lords were to have no power whatsoever. This policy was placed, in the form of resolutions, before the House of Commons; and it was endorsed by the full Government majority. That having been done, the House again took up the previous year's Budget; and it passed its third reading on April 27th. On the following day, it was accepted without a discussion by the House of Lords. The first round was over; and victory lay with the Government.

The ensuing stage in the conflict was beset with greater difficulty, inasmuch as it was more than likely that the Peers would reject root and branch all proposals having as their object the curtailment of the powers of their House. But a Prime Minister must have some very solid ground if he intends to ask his followers to submit to a second General Election within a few months of the first; and Asquith was well aware that he would not be able to persuade them to it unless he could assure them that, in the

event of another election being fought and won, the Royal prerogative would, if necessary, be brought into play, and the Parliament Bill forced through the House of Lords. By the beginning of May, Asquith had made up his mind to have another election; but also that, before dissolving Parliament, he would ask the King to give him "guarantees" that, if the result of the election were to prove favourable to the Government's House of Lords policy, the Peers would be compelled to accept it. That was the point to which the issue had developed when King Edward died—a fact which inevitably worked a transformation in the situation. The new Sovereign was neither young nor politically inexperienced; nevertheless, it would obviously be inconsiderate on the part of a Prime Minister, if any alternative course presented itself, to confront him, at the opening of his reign, with a first-class constitutional crisis. Asquith was always an excellent Party man; but he could put the public interest first; and it seemed to him that it would not be a patriotic thing to expose the monarchy, in the form of a new King, to the injury which might easily result from a wrong decision in matters of such vital constitutional importance. And with men of the experience of Asquith, Morley, Grey, and Haldane counselling one course, and men of the experience of Balfour, Curzon, Lansdowne, and Austen Chamberlain counselling another, would it not be laying too heavy a burden upon the new King to compel him at once to decide between them? Confronted with so difficult a position, Asquith decided to approach the Conservative leaders, and to suggest to them the holding of a joint conference, whose business it would be to traverse the entire field of disagreement between the parties, with special reference to the powers of the House of Lords, and to seek some compromise which would obviate the necessity for bringing the crisis to a head.

Balfour and Lansdowne, for their part no less anxious than Asquith to smooth the path of the new occupant of the throne, readily agreed.

The conference which followed met for the first time in the Prime Minister's room in the House of Commons on June 17th, and after that at intervals until the autumn. The Government was represented by the Prime Minister, Lloyd George, Lord Crewe, and Birrell; while the Conservatives present were Balfour, Lansdowne, Austen Chamberlain, and Lord Cawdor. No public reports of the proceedings were published; nor did many leakages occur at the time. Few records of the conference have come down to us: we have some notes left by Asquith, a memorandum by Lansdowne, and sundry references (most of them only from memory, and consequently none too reliable) in the memoirs of some of the men who took part. Throughout the six months occupied by the sittings of the conference, the rank and file of both political Parties were profoundly suspicious, fearing that their leaders were contemplating the betrayal of some deep conviction in the interest of compromise and peace. Asquith was probably the most optimistic member of the conference. The Tory leaders seem never to have regarded the proceedings as much more than a means of putting off the evil day of final conflict, while the new King was seating himself comfortably in the saddle.

In the light of later events, perhaps the most interesting thing discussed at the conference was the possibility of forming a Coalition Government. Lloyd George was the prime mover in this matter; and Balfour seems to have taken the suggestion perfectly seriously. Rumour, then and later, averred that a definite project for the formation forthwith of a Coalition Government, from which Asquith was to be excluded, was discussed. It is possible to give

that report a flat contradiction. Asquith knew of the talks that were taking place between Lloyd George and the Tory leaders, and regarded them with benevolent scepticism. Of excluding Asquith there never was any question; for in view of the towering position which he at that time occupied in the House of Commons, as well as in the Liberal Party throughout the country, such a suggestion could never have emanated from any sane man, and certainly not from such clever readers of the public mind as Lloyd George and Balfour. Asquith has left on record his belief in the sincerity of the members of the conference.

There were other matters besides the powers of the House of Lords discussed at the conference, though in a less official way—Compulsory Military Service, Imperial Preference, Home Rule, and Welsh Disestablishment—all of them favourite measures with one or other of the Parties. The suggestion was that Liberals should accept a moderate programme of tariffs and conscription, and that the Conservatives, in return, should accept Welsh Disestablishment and Irish Home Rule. To carry through such a programme a Coalition Government would have to be formed; for in no other way would it be possible to defy the many private Members of both Parties, who would, without doubt or hesitation, refuse to follow their leaders in the matter. In cold print these suggestions have an air of rigidity and officialism which they probably never wore at the conference itself. In all probability they never got beyond the stage of vague and tentative proposals, of what politicians are so fond of terming "exploring the avenues". What rumour seems to have done is to transplant into the conference deeper plots and conspiracies which were flourishing at the time elsewhere. Apparently Lloyd George and Winston Churchill were feeling perturbed at the deadlock between the two great political Parties towards which the country

appeared to be drifting; and Churchill had discovered that his intimate friend, F. E. Smith, on the Conservative side, was equally disquieted by the prospect. Churchill was never a great Party man, except in the sense that he would fight with might and main for the Party to which he happened to belong at the moment. Beginning as a Conservative, he had crossed the floor on the question of Free Trade; and after that, warmly espoused the cause of social reform. But a real Liberal it is probable that he never became; and again and again in the course of the period between 1910 and 1914 he was threatening to rejoin his old Party. Not that he really felt at home in the Tory fold either; and if he had joined it, he would, no doubt, soon be finding good reasons for discontent. For his type of mind a Coalition, or, better still, a Centre Party, had enormous attraction; and he seems to have urged, in 1910, that the time was ripe for the formation of a Government of that sort. His friend F. E. Smith was known in those days simply as the most brilliant swashbuckler on the Tory side of the House. In truth he was far from being a sound Party man. "On the surface", writes his son, "he was the bitter party *frondeur*; beneath, he was feeling his way towards the creation of a Coalition. He was an earnest advocate of national as opposed to Party government; when the Coalition fell in 1922 he regarded it as the greatest calamity of the post-War years and willingly followed his leader out of the limelight." The tension of Party politics had become unbearably acute in 1910. Smith was passionately eager to arrive at a settlement on all the great questions at issue—the Veto, Welsh Disestablishment, and Home Rule. Fundamentally there was, perhaps, but little disagreement between him and Churchill, the two were the most intimate of friends; and it is likely that they would not have found much difficulty in arriving at an agreed



programme, based upon a vigorous plan of national defence, and considerable measures of social reform, which would suffice to keep a National Government busy for many years. Asquith, with his deep-seated Liberal convictions, and his firm hold upon principle, could have but scanty sympathy with such a plan ; and it is likely enough that the two younger politicians may have discussed the possibility of discarding him, together with such members of the Old Guard of Conservatism as might also prove recalcitrant. But if Asquith were to be left out, there would be no hope at all of winning the support of a sufficient number of Liberals unless Lloyd George could be brought in. Next to Asquith, he was, at that time, easily the most influential member of the Party, both in the House of Commons and in the country. With Lloyd George, Churchill was on as friendly terms as he was with F. E. Smith. The two used to meet regularly, several times a week, under the roof of their common friend, Sir George Riddell, on the links at Walton Heath, and in the summer holidays down at Criccieth. On every political question they had hitherto seen eye to eye ; and no other leading politician had given such valuable help to the Chancellor on the public platform. Knowing his friend's innermost thoughts, Churchill did not despair of persuading him to throw in his lot with the proposed Coalition.

We have already had occasion to emphasise the fact that Lloyd George was not a good Party man, in the sense of being firmly wedded to a particular political philosophy. He would gladly work with any Party which gave promise of being the best instrument for the accomplishment of the purpose which he happened to have in view at a given moment. Apparently the thought that he was born a Liberal, and must die a Liberal, had no attraction for him. Consistency of that sort he has always despised. In this

respect he was fundamentally different from men like Morley, Bryce, Grey, and Asquith; men who derived their policy from a body of thought-out principles, and also judged every proposal, not by its expediency only, or even chiefly, but by its consistency with those principles. Lloyd George was essentially the man of the short view. He could see an abuse (no man could see more clearly at short range than he); and he could also see a way of immediately remedying it. What effect the remedy might have upon abuses in general some time in the future, was a question which never entered into his calculations at all. Such men are tremendously valuable; in moments of brief and acute crisis like war, they are useful beyond all others; but they obviously have their dangerous side; and they never make good colleagues, or consistent members of a political team.

Our evidence points to the fact that, in the summer of 1910, Lloyd George was seriously thinking of urging the formation of a Coalition Government. He was acutely sensitive to the futility of the old rigid division into parties, especially when a deadlock on all the major issues seemed to have been arrived at. The result of the last General Election had shown that the country was far from being enthusiastically behind the Government; and it seemed to him very doubtful whether the electorate would respond with any greater enthusiasm to the coming call to arise and smite the House of Lords. Meanwhile measures of social reform, concerning which he was tremendously in earnest, were being delayed, and even jeopardised, while the old barren controversies—Irish Home Rule, Welsh Disestablishment, and the like—were being fought over year in, year out. Lloyd George was also coming to be very alive to the dangers of the European situation. Every year of late he had been in the habit of spending some

weeks in Germany, Austria, and France, seeing much for himself, and meeting foreign journalists and politicians who were at the centre of things. He had soon discarded the old insularity of outlook; and by 1910 had come to be in complete agreement with the policy of Sir Edward Grey. Up to that time, save for an occasional Press interview, he had not given public expression to his views on foreign policy; nevertheless he was following events with care and interest; and only a year later, he was to step into the full limelight with his famous speech on the Agadir crisis. A European War was beginning to appear to him as likely; and in spite of the marvellous reforms in the army, for which Haldane was responsible, it seemed to him that nothing short of conscription would give the country the necessary security. But conscription was anathema to almost every Liberal; and Lord Roberts, who was urging its adoption, was the butt of innumerable attacks. So unpopular was it that even the Conservative leaders dared not give it their public support, however much they might sympathise with it in their hearts. The average Englishman, Liberal or Tory, instinctively felt that conscription and militarism were closely allied; and that both were dangerous enemies of that freedom which is the dearest possession of our citizens. Lloyd George, however, seems to have thought otherwise. Not a very good Liberal, it may be doubted whether his views on liberty itself were really orthodox. A great student of the French Revolution, he too, no doubt, would have inscribed upon his banner the words: "Liberty, Equality, Fraternity", but also, like the Frenchmen of 1789, in this trinity of ideals he singled out Equality as his special favourite. Now conscription might conflict with Liberty, but it could claim to be an ally of Equality. So they had thought in France, the most democratic of nations, when they made the duty of fighting

in his country's armies obligatory upon every citizen as such, until military service had come to be regarded not so much as a duty but as a privilege inherent in citizenship. Why then, should not as many Liberals and Conservatives as were not completely under the influence of the old shibboleths, join together to form a new Party, whose task it would be to get things done, and not to give dialectical exhibitions over fly-blown issues? Liberals would concede conscription and some measure of Tariff Reform; and the Tories would agree to Home Rule and Welsh Disestablishment. Once the old Party animosities had been laid aside, it was thought that it would be comparatively easy to reach an understanding on the question of the House of Lords.

Again it must be repeated that there was no intrigue behind Asquith's back. Churchill himself discussed all the proposals with him; and F. E. Smith similarly made them known to Balfour. Smith even made a public declaration in favour of "a real and honest truce" between the Parties, in a letter to *The Times*; and he followed it up with two private letters to Austen Chamberlain, in which he "envisaged a compromise on all the main problems of the day—the House of Lords, Home Rule, Tariff Reform—and proposed to enforce that compromise by a coalition of moderate Liberals and moderate Conservatives which would overwhelm the extremists on both sides". These letters from the pen of the man who was far and away the most effective fighter in the Conservative ranks, and who, next to Balfour, had undoubtedly the best brain in the Party, are of exceptional significance and interest.

F. E. Smith's second letter (October 21st, 1910) is explicit. Only a few lines of it need be quoted here. They indicate that there was no plot behind the back of the Prime Minister, and that the scheme was being seriously

discussed by all the leading men of both Parties. He writes: "I need not carry it further than this. The conference settlement is evidently a condition precedent to the larger settlement, and if the larger settlement is arranged we can afford to agree to very different terms in the conference settlement. Haldane, Birrell, and Crewe have all been consulted and have agreed. The present position therefore is that Asquith, L. George, Churchill, Haldane, Birrell, and Crewe (Grey cannot be seen until Monday) are prepared to come into a Government in which the offices great and small will be precisely divided among our party and theirs. Elibank is in their confidence and with them. I wish so much that you could see George yourself. I know that he would like to talk it over with you, and I should like to check my judgment of his intentions to play straight with us. I may be wrong, but I am tempted to say of him, *quem Deus vult perdere prius dementat*. It seems to me that he is done for ever unless he gradually inclines to our side in all the things that permanently count. I understand that Elibank counts upon forty Radical dissentients, but says that he will carry the Party machinery and of course the Irish. They are anxious you should go to either the Admiralty or the Colonies. I believe they mean to shunt our friend McKenna whom they hate."

The politicians who were urging this scheme for a Coalition were evidently over-sanguine. Neither Asquith nor Balfour had any serious intention of destroying the historic Party which he was leading. In particular we may be sure that Asquith was far too wily a tactician to surrender the dominant position which he then held in Parliament and country in exchange for the speculative gains which the seducers were holding before his eyes. In a letter to Smith, Churchill tells his friend quite bluntly that the best cards are all in the hands of the Liberals, and that they are

not likely to surrender them without far better terms than any hitherto proposed by the other side.

Lloyd George, in his *War Memoirs*, has himself given us a brief account of these momentous discussions. He had, he tells us, for some time been feeling uneasy with regard to the position of this country in the event of a European War breaking out. Scientific inventions were making warfare a very different thing from what it used to be in bygone days. In particular there were two urgent questions which England ought to face. (1) In the event of our fleet being defeated, had we sufficient force to repel an invasion? (2) In the event of a blockade of our shores, had we any chance of being able to provide ourselves with sufficient food? To both these queries he believed the answer to be in the negative. With regard to the second, a better and more scientific utilisation of the resources of our soil was the proper remedy. In the case of the first, he advocated, not a conscript army of the Continental type, but something resembling the Swiss militia system, the whole of our young mankind being compulsorily trained to defend their country. In the summer of 1910, following on the death of King Edward, there appeared to be such an accumulation of grave issues that the traditional Party system was bound to break down under their weight. There was the constitutional deadlock. There was the problem of unemployment, getting more and more difficult. Our foreign markets were slipping out of our grasp. The working classes were growing sullen and discontented. Our soil was gradually going out of cultivation, while at the same time we were becoming more and more dependent on our imported supplies of food. The countryside was languishing, and the towns were becoming unhealthily large. Drink was undermining the physique and efficiency of a considerable section of the population. The Irish

controversy was poisoning our relations with the United States. A great constitutional struggle over the House of Lords threatened revolution at home, while another threatened civil war at our door in Ireland. Were we able to deal with all this mass of problems and controversies by the old methods? Quite emphatically Lloyd George thought that we were not; and for that reason he submitted a memorandum to the Prime Minister, in which he urged that a truce should be called between the Parties, with the purpose of securing the co-operation of all the leading statesmen of the day in a great settlement of national problems—Second Chamber, Home Rule, Disestablishment, the development of our agricultural resources, national training for defence, the remedying of social evils, and a fair and judicial inquiry into the working of the fiscal system.

Asquith, it is alleged, regarded this proposal with favour, and it was decided to ask the opinion of other members of the Cabinet. Crewe, Grey, Haldane, and Churchill accordingly were consulted, all of whom approved the suggestion in principle. The only men outside the Liberal Party to whom Lloyd George showed his memorandum were F. E. Smith and J. L. Garvin; and both of them expressed their sympathy. Nor was Balfour, when the matter was laid before him, hostile; but he certainly made it clear that he was uncertain of how it would be regarded by his Party. Apparently several of his leading colleagues—Lansdowne, Cawdor, Curzon, Walter Long, Austen Chamberlain, and F. E. Smith, favoured the plan; but when it was submitted to the Party as a whole, there was decided opposition. Apparently Balfour had the candour to tell Lloyd George that the latter's presence in the proposed Coalition Cabinet would prove an unsurmountable obstacle, identified as he ~~was~~ in the minds of all rank-and-file Conservatives, with

everything which they most abhorred in politics. Lloyd George, it appears, replied that he would not make his own inclusion in the Ministry a condition precedent to giving it his support if it were to be formed. But Balfour was evidently very uneasy in his mind about the whole project; for after a few moments of silence he went on as if soliloquising: "I cannot become another Robert Peel in my Party." Then after another brief pause he added: "Although I cannot see where the Disraeli is to come from, unless it be my cousin Hugh, and I cannot quite see him fulfilling that role." Balfour then closed the interview with the remark that he would do nothing without consulting Lord Chilton, formerly known as Akers-Douglas, the Chief Conservative Whip. Without a moment's hesitation, that adroit Party manager condemned the whole plan, and it was heard of no more.

Apparently Lloyd George, when he came to pen his *Memoirs* more than thirty years after these events, still regretted the failure to set up a Coalition Government in 1910. Looking back, he believed that, if National Service had then been established, Germany would most probably have been restrained from recklessly allowing Austria to lead the world into war. And even if it had not proved sufficiently powerful as a deterrent to prevent the outbreak of war, it would at least have enormously enhanced the efficiency of Britain's efforts on the battlefields. This is his final reflection on the episode: "There is much to be said in favour of the Party system. The open conflict of Parties is better for a country than the squalid intrigues of personal ambitions or of rival interests conducted in the dark. But there are times when it stands seriously in the way of the highest national interests. On these occasions it hinders, delays and thwarts real progress, and in the event, the nation suffers heavily. I shall always regard the rejection



of the proposals for co-operation in 1910 as a supreme instance of this kind of damage. On the other hand, the ground for co-operation must be one of genuine national well-being. A suspension of Party hostilities merely in order to ensure a distribution of patronage and power among the leading contestants degrades and enervates politics."

The impartial historian would probably pronounce a far less favourable verdict upon the attempt to merge the two great parties in 1910; and without doubt its success would speedily have destroyed Lloyd George's own political position and influence. How seductive the accents of the tempter sounded in his ears is apparent from his own admission, as well as from the part which he played in the abortive deliberations. F. E. Smith, with a cynical absence of concern for the ultimate fate of the Chancellor of the Exchequer, which, in the circumstances, it is easy both to understand and to forgive, spoke truly when he reminded Austen Chamberlain that the gods first make mad the man they wish to destroy, and applied the tag to Lloyd George. A day came, years later, when this sort of dementia did seem to lay hold of him, bringing political destruction in its train: but in 1910 his guardian angels were strong enough to ward off the attack, so enabling him to serve the cause which he had already done so much to advance for another four years.

For what was the real parting of the ways at which Lloyd George stood in the summer of 1910? Quite clearly it was the choice between continuing to fight the battle of the "cottage-bred" man, to lead the great popular crusade which was revolutionising the old Victorian outlook of both Liberals and Tories on the proper relations to exist between rich and poor—all that on the one hand; and on the other hand, to betray those causes, in whose service he had hitherto so freely spent his magnificent gifts, and to ally

himself with the propertied classes, with privilege and class distinction, for the perpetuation of the existing order. Lloyd George has nearly always been clever. He has sometimes been great. But he has only been great when he has identified himself with some noble cause, in the greatness of which he passionately believes to the extent of forgetting himself and every prudential calculation. He has never belonged to that select band of men who have themselves ennobled a cause; but at times he has been ennobled by the causes for which he was fighting. The cause of religious liberty in Wales; the cause of the Boer Republics fighting for their freedom; the cause of the poor and the oppressed—these were all sufficiently big to master the entire man, and to bring out all the finest that was in him. But when he has merely calculated, sat down to scheme and to count the cost, thought with his head rather than with his heart, the consequences have invariably been disastrous for himself, and scarcely less so for his country.

It is quite true that in 1910 the old Liberal programme was wearing very thin, and that the fundamental differences between Conservatives and Liberals were growing indistinct. The truth is that, in their political outlook, both the historic Parties were so different from the newer tendencies then working in the minds of the British masses that the differences between themselves tended to sink into insignificance. Among his own colleagues Lloyd George could have found at least two—Grey and Haldane—who were fully aware of the fact. Balfour once described Grey as “a curious combination of the old-fashioned Whig and the Socialist”; and it is true that, despite his aristocratic birth, and the moderation which was so conspicuous a feature of his character, he was prepared to go every inch of the way with Lloyd George and the other more extreme Radicals of the day in the direction of drastic social reform. When

controversy over the Budget was at its most fierce, he wrote to a friend who had been abusing the Chancellor: "Mr. Lloyd George is a colleague with whom I have always been on the best of terms personally, and the Budget raises the money required in a way which presses much less, I believe, upon the poorer classes than any alternative that could be devised." Grey was always made angry when he heard the well-to-do denouncing the "selfishness" of the working classes in their desire to redress the balance in their own favour by means of legislation. "I myself", he wrote to another friend about this time, "cannot vote Conservative, because I see as much selfish motive on the one side as on the other; and the selfishness of the rich and the appeals to their selfishness are much more hateful to me than the selfishness of the poor and the appeals to them, much as I deprecate both." It is noteworthy that this hereditary aristocrat differed from almost all his colleagues in wishing, not to curb the power of the House of Lords, but to abolish it completely, and to substitute for it an elective Second Chamber.

Haldane was more bureaucratically-minded than Grey; he was a Progressive, rather than a Liberal; but he was inferior to none in his eagerness to embark upon a drastic reform of our wasteful and inefficient, as well as cruel and unjust, social system. But unfortunately, during those critical years, Haldane was immersed in his own gigantic plans for reforming the British Army; and what little time and energy was left over he devoted to the problems of university education. In the general work of the Cabinet of which he was one of the ablest members, he took but little part until after his elevation to the Woolsack. The army's gain was progressive democracy's loss: Haldane's powerful and fertile intellect could have rendered invaluable service if it had been directed to the "condition of the

people" problem. He was aware that a new attitude towards social problems, and the relation of the State to them, was being sedulously taught by a growing band of intellectuals; and that their doctrines, so greatly at variance with the Liberal tenets of such men as Campbell-Bannerman and Asquith, were gradually permeating large sections of the thinking community. Soon they would join hands with the Trade Unionists to constitute a powerful Labour Party which would proceed to occupy the position of leadership forfeited by the Liberal Party in consequence of its failure to move with the times. Writing in his *Autobiography* towards the end of his life, when he himself had been Labour's first Lord Chancellor, Haldane put his finger upon one of the chief things lacking in the Asquith Administration of pre-War days: "The result was that although the Government was a balanced, an energetic and good one, it was not sufficiently representative of the new spirit which it ought to have represented. No such ideal as that of service rendered as the true basis for the distribution of the profits of industry was thought of. We began slowly to lose what we had of the confidence of the men and women who lived by the work of their hands, and this gradually became apparent. What some of us could do we did, but we did not do enough."

Looking back now at those years from 1909 to 1914, we can see how critical they were, no less in the domestic sphere than in the foreign. The Liberal Party, with its great record of service in the past, was being offered a last chance of being the party of the future as well. It is true that there had been, ever since 1906, an active Labour Party in Parliament; but it was increasing neither in numbers nor in influence. The mass of the workers were, in fact, loath to break with Liberalism, for they were but little interested in the doctrinaire Socialism which appealed to

their comrades in European lands. They were waiting eagerly to see whether the Liberal Party could still be *their* Party; and it was not until they had become fully convinced that it had made the "great refusal" that they turned sorrowfully away, to seek new leaders, and to mould new traditions of their own. The significance of this great choice seems altogether to have escaped Lloyd George; or if it did not, we must perforce conclude that he elected, with his eyes open, to range himself with the "classes" rather than with the "masses". For no thanks are due to him that a Tory-Liberal Coalition did not come into being in 1910. Had it done so, the ultimate destruction of the Liberal Party would have been antedated by eight years, and without the instrumentality of a world war!

One wonders how Lloyd George could have been so blind, even momentarily; and even more how he could have brought himself to play with the idea of abandoning the cause of those less fortunate members of the community, on whose behalf he had, only a few weeks before, been striking such resounding blows. Were success and prosperity beginning to cloud his ideals? Was middle-age bringing even to his ardent soul its usual disillusionment? Were the new friends, in whose society he now spent almost all his spare time—men whose outlook upon life was, in the main, that of the slightly cynical, the successful, and the self-made—beginning to dim for him the old lights which, from Llanystumdwy to Downing Street, had guided his course? Such queries obtrude themselves upon the mind; but they cannot be answered with any confidence. Fortunately, no coalition was formed; the old influences reasserted themselves in Lloyd George's life, and he was enabled to render a few more services to those causes with which his permanent reputation for statesmanship is intertwined before he turned finally away to other fields of

activity. The indictment against him is, that confronted with an opportunity which was never to recur of welding into one great Party all the progressive forces in politics, he failed to seize it; nay, he even went so far as he could in the direction of an alliance with those forces against which the working classes had had to battle throughout the course of their rise from serfdom into something like freedom and equality. Some extenuation of this wellnigh inexplicable failure, not only of his moral, but of his political, sense as well may be found in the uncompromising attitude of the Labour Party at the time. So long as the Liberal Government was pursuing a programme of vigorous social legislation, the Labour Party had been content to give it support in the division lobbies. To such an extent, in fact, were the two Parties identified in the public mind, that at elections their votes were generally grouped together. It is an interesting fact that Asquith and Balfour did not deem it desirable to invite a representative of Labour to the Party conference. But although willing to support the Government on most points, the Labour Party had resolutely refused to coalesce with the Liberals, though the possibility of so doing had often been discussed: they preferred to remain a mere group, until such time as disintegrating influences even then clearly at work within the Liberal Party should make them a present of the position of alternative Government. By making that choice they, like Lloyd George, also contributed in no small measure to produce the situation which supervened when the War was over—a situation in which there was no united Party of progress to withstand the rampant forces of reaction which had by then gained the upper hand.

## CHAPTER THIRTEEN

### THE PARLIAMENT BILL [1911]

THE failure of the Party conference was announced by Asquith in the House of Commons, to the no small relief of the vast majority of both Liberals and Conservatives; and the position automatically reverted to what it had been on the eve of the death of King Edward. The Prime Minister had pledged himself to his followers not to recommend a dissolution and a second election within the year without first having obtained from King George a promise that, in the event of another Liberal victory at the polls, enough new peers would forthwith be created to swamp all opposition in the House of Lords, and to ensure the passage of the Parliament Bill into law. On November 11th, Asquith visited the King at Sandringham and laid the situation before him, and on November 16th, accompanied by Lord Crewe, he repaired to Buckingham Palace to receive the King's answer. Quite clearly it was the constitutional duty of the Sovereign to act on the advice of his Ministers in such a conjuncture; and whatever personal disinclination George V may have had to inflict such ignominy upon the House of Lords, he perceived it to be so, and without hesitation gave the required "guarantees". What passed between the King and the Premier at this historic interview was not disclosed until the following year; for to publish it then and there would inevitably have meant making the Sovereign's action a topic of debate during the forthcoming election; and furthermore, if the Peers

had voluntarily agreed to pass the Parliament Act, no more need ever have been heard about the "guarantees".

In order that there might be no possible doubt as to what the election was being fought to determine, the King had stipulated that the Parliament Bill should be presented to the House of Lords before the dissolution. But when that was done, instead of debating it, Lansdowne moved the adjournment of the debate, and brought forward certain proposals of his own for the "reform" of the Upper Chamber. As the new House of Lords which he wished to create would have retained, from the Liberal standpoint, all the objectionable features of the existing Chamber, and would be no less a Tory stronghold, with even enhanced powers, it is obvious that such a plan could not for a moment be considered by the Government as a possible substitute for their own method of depriving the Lords of their absolute veto. And even if Liberals had been willing to commit suicide by accepting Lansdowne's plan, formidable opposition would have arisen from the hundreds of obscure peers who were to be ruthlessly deprived of their right to be hereditary legislators. It may well be doubted whether this plan for "reforming" the House of Lords was anything more than an electioneering dodge, a death-bed repentance designed solely for throwing dust in the eyes of the electorate.

The General Election took place in December; and in almost every respect it was a replica of the one held in the previous January. When it was over the Government found itself reinstated in power with a majority of 126, and a clear mandate to proceed with the Parliament Bill. It is true that the Liberals were again dependent on the support of the Irish, and of the Labour Party; but as these allies were emphatically in favour of a drastic curtailment of the Lords' powers, the Government's mandate suffered no



moral weakening on that account. Far more than the previous election, that of December had been fought on this single issue; and only the wilfully perverse could doubt that the people had pronounced in favour of the Government's proposed constitutional policy. Tariff Reform had, it is needless to say, again raised its head; and it appeared in the election addresses of practically all Conservative candidates. It could hardly have been otherwise; for a candidate seeking the suffrages of the electors would have stood but a poor chance if his sole appeal had been for authority to add to the powers of the House of Lords at the expense of the Commons! There was also much gibing at the Government's alliance with the Irish, and a good deal of anger, real or simulated, at the latter's receipt of financial aid from their fellow-countrymen in the United States. Redmond and his American dollars played just then as prominent a part in Conservative speeches and posters as Chinese Slavery had done in those of Liberals in 1906. Lloyd George gave great offence to more than one lordly home by asking very pertinently: "Since when have our Peers begun to dislike American dollars?"

In the December General Election Lloyd George had as his opponent a young, eloquent, and promising barrister, Austin Jones by name. Needless to say, he was a Churchman, and his knowledge of Welsh was no more than a smattering. The Chancellor's majority this time was 1,208. He had opened the campaign in apparently first-rate fighting fettle. To his own constituency he gave but little time; for again, as on the occasion eleven months before, he made whirlwind tours through England and Wales, to arouse enthusiasm among the faithful, and to beat down the case of their opponents. The weather was cold, though not bad for December. Much of his speaking was done in the open air, and consisted of ten-minute speeches, delivered

from a cart, or a rough platform hastily constructed, in a long string of villages and towns. The motor car was just beginning to make its value felt as an electioneering instrument; and a great deal of Lloyd George's time was spent in driving to and fro, stopping to speak a few words at every likely spot. A day spent in that fashion, followed in the evening by an hour's speech to a crowded audience in a great hall, in the depths of winter, was a trying ordeal; and before the end of the campaign the Chancellor's voice had failed him, and the throat trouble which was to cause his retirement for several months had evinced itself. He immediately sought relief in a holiday on the Riviera, and from there he returned to near Folkestone, where Sir Arthur Markham had lent him his house. There he spent the next few months, retired from the political arena, but hard at work preparing his Insurance Bill. An ordinary man would hardly have called it a rest cure. He had a private telephone line installed, so that he could be in constant communication with his department in London. Experts came there to confer with him for hours every day. From the strain of public speaking, however, he was completely relieved; and since the trouble in his throat was never of a really serious kind, his recovery was rapid and complete. At the beginning of May, 1911, he was back in his place in the House of Commons.

Meanwhile Asquith had been proceeding with the Parliament Bill. He, like most other people, had assumed that the Lords, after the Liberal victory at the polls, would have bowed to the inevitable, and agreed to accept the Parliament Bill with what grace they could. It was soon discovered, however, that they were still in an unyielding frame of mind. Vain projects of a reform of the Upper House were produced, discussed briefly, and then dropped. The King interviewed the Tory leaders, and tried to persuade

them of the folly of prolonging the contest. Before the moment for final decision had arrived, it was apparent that the Conservative Peers were divided into two camps: the one in favour of yielding to superior force; the other (commonly known as "Diehards") eager to defy the Government to do its worst. Yielding to pressure from his own supporters, Lansdowne proceeded to turn the Parliament Bill inside out in committee; and when it returned to the Commons it was, to quote Asquith's words, "as completely transformed as if no General Election had taken place". It was now obvious to the Prime Minister that Lansdowne had yielded so far to the bellicose wishes of his supporters as to render it impossible for him to give way, save under threat of coercion. The moment had therefore arrived for putting the "guarantees" into operation. On July 14th, Asquith addressed a minute to the King, informing him that it would be the Government's duty to advise him to exercise his prerogative to secure the passing of the Bill; and three days later the King intimated his willingness to do so. Then for the first time the fact was disclosed to Lansdowne and Balfour; and they, in turn, communicated the fateful news to the Peers as a whole. The news seems to have come as a great shock to them, as they had certainly thought that the whole thing was only bluff. Now they knew that if they persisted in the course upon which they had embarked, three hundred new peers would be at once created, with the result that not only the Parliament Bill, but a whole flood of Liberal legislation would flow over their heads. Confronted with this dire possibility, Lansdowne at once decided upon surrender, and that became the official policy of his Party. Many peers, however, including such leading names as Salisbury, Halsbury, Milner, and Selborne, were still in favour of a fight to a finish; and it is noteworthy that Joseph Chamberlain, from

his bed of sickness, endeavoured to do one last disservice to his country by encouraging the rebels. Right to the end no one could have predicted which way the verdict would go. The Diehards were confident of victory, but Morley's plain declaration, made on the second day of the debate, in the House of Lords, that: "If the Bill should be defeated to-night His Majesty will assent to the creation of peers sufficient in number to guard against any possible combination of the different Parties in Opposition by which the Parliament Bill might be exposed a second time to defeat. Every vote given against my motion to-night will be a vote for a large and prompt creation of peers" had its effect upon the waverers, and upon the more responsible peers who did not wish to turn their House into a joke; and the Bill was carried by a majority of 17. Thus ended the great struggle between Lords and Commons, which had begun when the Upper House rejected Gladstone's Home Rule Bill. The last battle had opened with the rejection of the Budget, on the 30th of November, 1909, and it ended with the final passing into law of the Parliament Act on August 10th, 1910.

Apart from the two General Elections, the fight over the Parliament Bill, and the constitutional conference, there is not much to record about Lloyd George in the year 1910. Throughout the tense period of struggle between the Houses, Asquith was the centre figure on the political stage, and Lloyd George occupied a definitely subordinate position. In both the elections he played a leading part, and it is doubtful whether the massive and logical reasoning of the Premier could have won a popular victory unaided by the magic eloquence of his Welsh colleague. In between the elections, as we have seen, the constitutional conference was sitting; and most of Lloyd George's thought was devoted to questions, public and private, arising from it. In June

he opened his second Budget. It was a cheerful record of financial progress. No new taxes were required. "The old country", the Chancellor remarked, "is still the soundest investment going." September and October were enlivened by a storm in a teacup over the famous "Form Four". Few people to-day could even recall what it was all about; and yet Lord Rosebery in describing it declared that "there is a cry of anguish throughout the land, and with all connected with the land. I do not know how many millions of my fellow-creatures—everyone who has a foothold on the land, either the temporary foothold of a lease, or what was once considered, but I think is no longer so, the more desirable occupation of a freehold—every one of these suffering fellow-countrymen is at this moment exposed to an inquisition unknown since the Middle Ages, but it has tortured them almost to extinction. The boot and the thumbscrew have not yet come, but the Inquisition in every other form is complete". Under this rhodomontade one would hardly expect to discover the offending cause in the form of a number of queries relating to the tenure of land which Somerset House had addressed to all owners. Income-tax payers had been answering similar questions for years, not indeed with joy, but at least without proclaiming themselves tortured martyrs; but it was something new for the owners of land to have to fill in forms of any kind, or to render to the community a return for their stewardship. The fact that so vocal and widespread an agitation rose from so trivial an irritation is proof of the sensitiveness of landowners a quarter of a century ago, and their determination to keep the nation from prying into what they regarded as their rights.

## CHAPTER FOURTEEN

### INSURANCE AND AGADIR [1911]

THE year 1911 was, in many respects, an exceedingly important one. It saw the framing of the Parliament Act and the National Insurance Act, the supplanting of Balfour by Bonar Law as Conservative leader, and the substitution of Winston Churchill for McKenna as First Lord of the Admiralty. Added to these things there was trouble of a most serious nature in the industrial world, with railway and coal strikes. Abroad it was the year of the Agadir crisis—the last of the series of incidents which destroyed cordial relationships between England and Germany, and which, before 1914, brought the Great Powers to the verge of a general war. With all these events (save only the deposition of Balfour by his own people) Lloyd George was concerned; and it is necessary to see how he was related to them.

From Lloyd George's point of view, obviously the National Insurance Act was far the most important event of the year. It marks for him a definite and spectacular return to the role of the people's champion, after the temporary abdication due to the constitutional conference. There was nothing, however, in the Insurance Act which even the most reactionary Conservative could describe as demagogic. On the contrary, it savoured rather of paternalism and bureaucracy; and similar schemes had long been in operation in Germany. We have seen earlier in this narrative how interested Lloyd George had been in

the whole problem of the duty of the community towards its less prosperous and more unfortunate members; and how he had taken the trouble to visit foreign countries in order to examine on the spot the schemes which they had adopted. That the State ought to make itself responsible for a scheme whereby its citizens might be protected against some of the evils incident to sickness and unemployment was his profound conviction; but so engrossing had been the fight over the Budget, and over the Veto of the Lords, that it was not until 1911 that he had leisure to produce a Bill. Even then a statesman less abounding in energy and drive would probably have postponed so big a scheme; for the Government was only waiting for the Parliament Bill to become law before proceeding in earnest with Home Rule and Welsh Disestablishment. But what would have been regarded by the majority of men as a well-earned period of leisure was seized upon by Lloyd George as an opportunity for carrying into law the complicated measure of National Insurance over which he had spent so many days during his enforced retirement in the spring.

In the speech with which he introduced the Bill in the House of Commons, he declared that it was a non-Party, and a non-controversial measure; and the House seems to have accepted the Bill as such. Lloyd George was well used to fervid applause from the Liberal benches; but seldom had he drawn a cheer from the Conservative side. On this occasion, however, both sides vied with each other in voicing their approval. Balfour was all smiles and compliments; and when a sceptical Tory made an interruption while the Chancellor was speaking, he was rudely silenced by his own colleagues. *Punch* hit off the occasion with a cartoon in which Lloyd George is seen standing on a stage, attired in evening dress, bowing as he receives the

haloes cast by a crowded audience, and remarking: "Never knew the haloes come so thick before. Pit and gallery I'm used to, but now the stalls and dress circle have broken out." It seems to have been confidently assumed by all that the Insurance Bill would be universally popular. But disillusionment was close at hand; and notwithstanding their first outburst of enthusiasm, the Conservatives were not slow in taking up the hue and cry against the measure as soon as they discovered how unpopular it was in many influential quarters, and further, that it was regarded with a good deal of cool indifference by the very people whose lot it was intended to brighten.

The Insurance Bill was in two parts—one dealing with Invalidity, the other with Unemployment. The latter part was limited in scope, and purely tentative in character. A beginning was made with certain trades—shipbuilding, engineering, building, and a few others—which were peculiarly liable to fluctuation. In those selected trades, provision was to be made at the rate of seven shillings a week, on the basis of one week's benefit for every five contributions, with a maximum of fifteen weeks in any one year. The scheme was to be contributory, employers and employed paying twopence-halfpenny a week respectively, and the State making up the rest. It was estimated that about 2,250,000 workers would come within the scope of the Act.

That part of the Bill which dealt with Sickness and Invalidity was on a much bigger, and obviously more permanent, scale. It aimed at ensuring some 15,000,000 workers against the consequences of sickness, without displacing the existing Friendly Societies, Trade Unions, and other organisations of like kind. Such societies might apply for recognition as "Approved Societies", in which case they would become administrators of the Insurance



fund for their own members, though those who preferred to do so would be allowed to draw their benefits from the post office. The scheme was both compulsory and contributory—a fact which roused the wrath of extreme Labour men and extreme Tories. Contribution was at the rate of threepence a week from the employer in respect of each employee, fourpence a week from each male employee, threepence a week from each female, and twopence from the State. Medical attendance, drugs and maternity benefit were to be available for every insured person.

Obviously so vast and new an enterprise, in which State, employers and employed were to co-operate, would prove difficult and irksome to work at first. There would be plentiful forms to fill; and until the official machinery entrusted with its working had obtained a good deal of practice, mistakes entailing hardship were bound to occur. These difficulties have long been surmounted, and the principles of the Act have become so embedded in our social system that we to-day could not imagine this country existing without them. Looking back at Lloyd George's achievement, when he himself and the author of the Act were spending their old age in retirement, Philip Snowden wrote: "I say this now, after twenty years' of experience of the National Health Act and the Unemployment Insurance Act, that these measures, with the amendments which have subsequently been made, are the two greatest measures of social reform ever placed upon the Statute Book. The Unemployment Insurance scheme has, I believe, saved this country from revolution in the long trade depression we have had since 1929."

Lloyd George apparently believed with all sincerity that his measure was non-Party and uncontroversial. He presented it to the House in a conciliatory speech, in which he candidly admitted that so novel and vast a plan must

needs have many defects ; and he insisted that all Members should regard it as their duty to assist him in making it as perfect as could be. Perhaps he had taken the protestations of the Conservative representatives at the constitutional conference of the previous year at their face value, when they declared their eagerness to unite in measures of social reform ! Believing, therefore, that he could count upon the support of the Opposition, he framed the peroration to the speech in which he introduced the Bill in Parliament as an appeal for co-operation. "I appeal to the House of Commons", he cried, "to help the Government not merely to carry this Bill through, but to fashion it ; to strengthen it where it is weak, to improve it where it is faulty. I am sure if this is done we shall have achieved something which will be worthy of our labours." Here was the fighting Chancellor speaking with wooing accents which had not been heard from him since his days at the Board of Trade. The Opposition responded in like manner ; and the Bill passed its first and second readings without a division. One criticism only did the Opposition make of the principle of the Bill ; and that was, that it dealt at the same time with Health, and with Unemployment. On that point, however, the Government could not change its mind, being convinced that the two things were inseparable as the twin ills which did most to create pauperism.

If Lloyd George had expected that the Insurance Bill would prove popular in the country, he was grievously mistaken. The Unemployment Insurance provisions, which were very restricted in scope, met with little opposition ; it was over the Health Insurance clauses that the storm broke. With a large section of the community it was unpopular because of its contributory nature. A still larger section disliked it owing to the fact that it was compulsory, and savoured too much of State Socialism. And so comprehensive was

the Bill, touching so many interests, that it was only too easy for the mischievous to stir up resentment. The Friendly Societies were suspicious; and so were the Insurance Companies. Doctors everywhere were up in arms. Mayfair declared that it would rather go to prison than "lick stamps for Lloyd George". Only very slowly was it that the workers came to realise all that the measure would do for them. It is no exaggeration to say that the unfortunate Chancellor was, for a few months in 1912, again, for the second, if not for the third, time in his life, the most unpopular man in the country. Profoundly convinced, however, that the day would come, and that soon, when the people would see their mistake, and turn to bless what they were now cursing, Lloyd George and the Government went on their way, doing everything in their power to remedy proved defects in the scheme, and ignoring criticisms which were unreasonable and prejudiced. "No man with less energy, tenacity, and determination than Mr. Lloyd George"—to quote Philip Snowden again—"could have carried the Bill through in the teeth of the opposition of many powerful vested interests." Criticism, especially ignorant or malicious criticism, has never interfered unduly with Lloyd George's enjoyment of life. His unfailing sense of humour has generally saved him from any disposition to brood over his wrongs. When the storm of unpopularity roused by the Insurance Act was raging most fiercely, he used to tell, with infinite gusto, the story of the Londoner who, having fished a drowning man out of the Thames, first turned his face towards the light in order to make sure, before he attempted to restore him, that it was not Lloyd George! A man who can joke with his adversaries in that way, may be trusted to endure years of political controversy without being soured or becoming a cynic. It must not be supposed, of course, that everybody was against the Bill.

The entire Cabinet, and the whole Liberal Party in the House, were solidly behind it. In the country, too, there was a large body of enlightened opinion which perceived its advantages. It was an immense help that a measure, looked askance upon as the Insurance Bill was by the lower classes, should have been sponsored by the one statesman above all others who in word and deed had given such incontrovertible proof of being the friend of the working man: without that invaluable asset, it is more than likely that it never could have been carried into effect.

As reports concerning the vast unpopularity of the Insurance Bill reached them from the constituencies, the Conservative leaders began to repent of the too cordial welcome which they had extended to it. But their approval had been expressed too unequivocally in Parliament for open opposition to it in principle now to be possible. Consequently, while Conservative criticism of the measure in Parliament remained ostensibly friendly, in the constituencies, and at by-elections, ruthless war was declared. The Tory Press denounced the measure without mercy, referring to it as "the malingerer's millennium", "the cheat's charter", and other equally uncomplimentary things. The Liberal Unionist Party, whose unlovely and useless life was not yet finally extinct, issued a leaflet in which the Insurance Bill was fiercely denounced as "A compulsory payment towards Socialism".

Meanwhile, Lloyd George went calmly on his way, receiving deputations, holding conferences, and doing all in his power to conciliate reasonable opposition. Throughout the protracted contest, both on the floor of the House, and on countless platforms in the country, the Chancellor found invaluable support in the fine mind, and eloquent tongue, of a young politician who was rapidly coming to the front—C. F. G. Masterman.

The Opposition in the House found themselves in a difficult predicament; for having so vociferously proclaimed their approval when the measure looked as if it would prove a resounding popular success, they could not now, with any sense of decency, turn and rend it. What they actually did was neither seemly nor chivalrous; they continued to give it perfunctory support in Parliament, while allowing their agents and supporters in the country to misrepresent it and to attack it without moderation. In his intense eagerness to run with the hare and hunt with the hounds, Bonar Law cut a truly ludicrous figure; and when he made his famous "Yes and No" speech, he became a figure of fun for the whole nation. Finally, after passing the Commons with substantial majorities, the Insurance Bill gained the approval of the House of Lords on December 11th.

The Insurance Act was henceforward the law of the land. But so comprehensive a measure, needing the *bona-fide* co-operation of almost the whole community, could never be worked in the face of persistent obstruction and hostility. The Government accordingly decided, early in 1912, that it would be necessary to undertake extensive propaganda on its behalf. Now that the Conservatives were showing their real hostility, in spite of the lip service done to the measure by their leaders in Parliament, the Liberals considered that they were fully entitled to treat it henceforth as a Party measure. For if they were to be saddled with all the temporary unpopularity accruing from the Act, surely they would be entitled also to any ultimate popularity which might spring from it when the workers had begun to reap the benefits which it held in store for them? That it would, sooner or later, come to be warmly appreciated by the labouring classes, Lloyd George never doubted for a moment.

To expound the Act lecturers began to be sent out to every part of the country, chosen and financed by Liberal headquarters. Lloyd George himself, whose throat had now completely recovered, took a leading part in the work of propaganda, and addressed a number of crowded meetings. He dealt triumphantly with his opponents, in particular denouncing the meanness of their tactics. His attitude towards the many "resisters" of the Act was a mixture of anger and contempt; and organisations like the "Servants' Tax Resisters' Defence Association", which had staged a great protest meeting at the Albert Hall, in the course of which the Chancellor was described as "a tyrant, gagger, guillotiner, attempting to do what the worst of kings in the darkest ages of history failed to do", assuredly merited nothing but scorn. "You cannot", Lloyd George reminded them in his reply, "make lawlessness a monopoly of the well-to-do. It is a dangerous moment to preach these doctrines. The soil is ready for the tares, and the atmospheric conditions help to promote their growth, and those who teach them are sowing a crop that they may reap in tears in a few years to come." Throughout the campaign the Chancellor was supported by Masterman. This young politician seemed destined to go far, for his knowledge of social problems was unsurpassed; he wrote a brilliant style; as a debater and public speaker he was in the first class; and his happy and generous disposition made him a favourite with all who knew him. Masterman may, without exaggeration, be said to have given his political life for the Insurance Act. The Prime Minister very fittingly decided to reward him for his matchless services by raising him to Cabinet rank. When in consequence, however, he came to fight for his seat in Parliament, he soon discovered that his Conservative opponents, by portraying him as the incarnation of the Insurance Act, could bring about his

defeat. Again and again he tried, but was always rejected at the polls. That this brilliant political life was permanently extinguished so early is one of the tragedies of public life in this country in recent times.

The Insurance Act never became a valuable electioneering asset. But by degrees it won its way, and eventually came to be accepted as an inevitable part of our scheme of things. The people who still think that the less prosperous members of the community are most fittingly left to be the objects of the capricious charity of the rich may deplore it, as they deplore every other measure intended to endow the indigent with a right to be properly cared for. But the vast majority in this country, irrespective of party, are to-day convinced that justice is better than charity, and scientifically planned relief better than individual caprice. The Insurance Act of 1911 was not perfect; and that no one acknowledged more readily than its author. But it did make a solid beginning; and it provided a foundation upon which could be built, by succeeding generations as they saw fit, an expanding scheme by which some of the worst blows of adversity can be tempered before they smite those members of the community who are least able to protect themselves. If he had written his name in no other way upon our Statute Book, Lloyd George would, in virtue of his Insurance Act, be entitled to a place in the front ranks of British social reformers.

A pleasant interlude in the middle of these acrid discussions arising out of the Insurance Act was the Investiture as Prince of Wales of the King's eldest son, Prince Edward, on July 11th, 1911. Caernarvon Castle was, very properly, chosen as the stage for the ceremony; for not only does the great fortress provide an incomparable background for heraldic pageantry of the sort, but Caernarvon is in every way typical of Wales. Moreover, legend has it that from a

window in Caernarvon Castle Edward I presented his newly-born heir to the people as their Prince. Lloyd George had, sometime previously, been appointed Constable of Caernarvon Castle; and it was he that originated the plan of reviving the ancient ceremony of investing the Prince of Wales in the appropriate surroundings. Incidentally the occasion would be an opportunity for allowing King George and Queen Mary, recently crowned in London, to show themselves, with all regal pomp, to their Welsh subjects. Every possible care was taken to prepare the fine and picturesque ceremony, so that it might be in every way impressive. Lloyd George himself, in consultation with all the professional masters of state pageantry, had found time to deal with every detail; not even forgetting to give a course of lessons in Welsh to the Prince. Those people (and doubtless there were many) who condemned the telegram which Lloyd George dispatched from Jamaica to the Duke of Windsor on Christmas Day, 1936, did not realise, perhaps, what good friends he and King Edward VIII had always been. From earliest infancy Lloyd George had known him intimately; and at Windsor and Balmoral he had played leap-frog and indulged in other boyish frolics with him in those comparatively carefree years before the War. It was with pride and joy that the Chancellor brought the young Prince to the principal town of his own constituency in 1911. Twenty-five years later it was with a heart heavy with disappointment, mingled with anger at the thought that it need not have been so, that he saw so much early promise blighted, and a man superbly gifted for democratic kingship doomed to live a purposeless existence in foreign lands.

No one who was present at the investiture is ever likely to forget it. The day was intensely hot, and from early dawn the little town was full to overflowing. Drapery embroidered



with the Royal Arms, and with the Feathers of the Prince of Wales, covered the ancient grey walls of the castle, while Union Jacks and Welsh Dragons hung from every staff, and waved from every window. Within there had assembled all that was brilliant and representative of Welsh life; while accompanying the Royal Family came a crowd of their most distinguished servants—Mr. Asquith, the Prime Minister, Mr. Churchill, the Home Secretary, Mr. Balfour, the Leader of the Opposition and, of course, the Constable of the Castle. Lloyd George was then at the summit of his marvellous popularity in Wales. A rumour that he would pass through a place in his car was always sufficient to line the roads with eager and enthusiastic crowds, who would travel miles on foot just to catch a glimpse of his face, or even to see the long grey hair waving in the breeze as he sped by. He knew perfectly well that, were he to appear in one hall, and the Royal Family in another, the vast majority of the people would be with him. And for that reason, in order that the King, the Queen, and the Prince might have the whole stage to themselves on that day, he was careful to keep himself well in the background. He performed the Constable's duty of receiving the King at the gate, and of handing to him the key of the castle; but beyond that, he played no part in the ceremony, and gave no opportunity to the crowds to acclaim him when it was more fitting that they should acclaim their King and their Prince. The great moment of a particularly fine ceremony was that in which the Prince greeted the Welsh people in their own language.

In 1911, there were few opportunities given to statesmen to sail on the calm waters of state pageantry; and no sooner was the Investiture over than Ministers found themselves confronted with the serious international situation to which the name "Agadir" came to be attached. The story has

been told too often already to require repetition here ; still, it is necessary to refer to it, since it caused Lloyd George to make one of his very rare excursions into the realm of foreign affairs in pre-War days ; and, in fact, to become the instrument which brought the crisis to a head. Suffice it to say that the controversy between Germany and France over the disposition of the great heritage obviously slipping out of the feeble grasp of the Sultan of Morocco was, in the summer of 1911, passing through one of its acute stages. The fact that a rebel chieftain was said to be advancing on Fez had provided the French with a pretext for sending an army there, ostensibly for the protection of the Sultan and the European residents. As such action was a familiar part of the ritual of imperial expansion, the Germans were naturally sceptical, and promptly declared that a French occupation of Fez would " create a new situation ". This bit of diplomatic jargon was rightly interpreted by the French to mean that Germany would claim " compensation " elsewhere ; and of their own accord they suggested that it might be found in the French Congo. In order that everything might be done in the most approved diplomatic style, Jules Cambon, the French Ambassador to Germany, and Kiderlen-Waechter, the German Foreign Minister, both repaired to Kissingen to take the cure ; and there, in the intervals between massage and water-drinking, they thoroughly thrashed out the situation. It was believed in Paris and in London that a satisfactory arrangement had been achieved.

Just at that moment, and without any warning, Germany sent a small warship—the *Panther*—to Agadir ; which action, in the curious symbolic language of the Chancelleries of those days, was tantamount to a threat of war. Agadir was not a trading port, nor were there any Germans in its vicinity. The members of the Entente could therefore draw only

two conclusions from the sending of the ship : France concluded that the German Government was again testing the strength of the alliance against her by offering a choice between humiliation and war ; while England concluded that Germany was aiming at acquiring a naval base on the west coast of Africa, and that would constitute a direct menace to our Imperial communications. Grey immediately warned the German Ambassador that Great Britain would not be a passive spectator. Kiderlen-Waechter was a convinced believer in the policy of the " big stick " ; but the Kaiser was thoroughly frightened at the imminence of war, and rated his Ministers soundly for placing Germany in such a situation that she must either fight, or withdraw ignominiously. For it soon became apparent that the Entente would hold together. No less than three weeks, however, elapsed before there was any lessening of the tension, as each side kept hoping that the other would give way. It was at that moment, and in order to resolve any doubt that might linger in the minds of the Germans with regard to the attitude of England, that Lloyd George made his famous Mansion House speech. The passage relating to the Moroccan situation, occurring in the middle of one of those speeches on miscellaneous topics which it is the custom of the Chancellor of the Exchequer to make from time to time in the City, is worth quoting in its entirety. " I conceive that nothing would justify a disturbance of international goodwill ", he declared " except questions of the greatest national moment. But if a situation were to be forced upon us in which peace could only be preserved by the surrender of the great and beneficent position Britain has won by centuries of heroism and achievement, by allowing Britain to be treated, where her interests were vitally affected, as if she were of no account in the Cabinet of nations, then I say emphatically that peace at that price

would be a humiliation intolerable for a great country like ours to endure. National honour is no Party question. The security of our great international trade is no Party question. The peace of mind of the world is much more likely to be secured if all nations realise fairly what the conditions of peace must be. And it is because I have the conviction that nations are beginning to understand each other better, to appreciate each other's points of view more thoroughly, to be more ready to discuss calmly and dispassionately their differences, that I feel assured that nothing will happen between now and next year which will render it difficult for the Chancellor of the Exchequer in this place to respond to the toast proposed by you, my Lord Mayor, of the continued prosperity of the public purse."

These words created instantaneously a first-class sensation throughout Europe. No one, least of all the people who were versed in the circumlocutions of diplomatic speech, could fail to realise its import. It meant, without doubt, that if Germany refused to withdraw from Agadir, Britain and France would pick up the gauntlet, and war would ensue. The threat carried all the more weight coming, as it did, from a man who was identified with that section of the British Cabinet which disliked armaments, hated diplomatic blustering, and loathed war. Only one inference could be drawn: if the peace-loving Lloyd George was for war, then England must be united on the issue. In Germany the anger was great. The German Ambassador in London was instructed to protest formally against a speech which had "a tone of provocation towards Germany". A hint was even conveyed that the Kaiser considered it to be his due that the offending Minister should be dismissed! A similar protest had led, six years before, to the dismissal of a popular French Foreign Minister; and the rulers of Germany

seem to have thought that the British people would suffer foreign interference with equal docility. It was presumed, perhaps, that so outspoken an utterance as the one in question could only have been made by Lloyd George with that irresponsibility which it pleased so many of his critics to impute to him. That, however, was not the case; for his speech had been written out in full, and received in advance the approval of both Asquith and Grey. In his *Twenty-five Years*, Grey has left us his recollection of the incident; and in all essentials it agrees with the account given by Lloyd George in his *War Memoirs*. "The speech", says Grey, "was entirely Lloyd George's own idea. I did nothing to instigate it. The effect was much greater than any words of mine could have been. . . . It created a great explosion of words in Germany, but it made the *Chauvinists* there doubt whether it would be wise to fire the guns." Lloyd George had arrived half an hour late at the banquet—an unprecedented lack of punctuality on the part of the chief guest at the Mansion House. The reason for the delay was freely canvassed among the waiting guests, the more rabid partisans among them attributing it to the bad manners which one might expect from the hen-roost-robbing Chancellor! In fact, Lloyd George had been closeted with Asquith and Grey, anxiously weighing every syllable of the crucial passage which he was about to deliver.

The speech did not immediately resolve the tension, and Europe remained on the verge of war for another two months. So apprehensive that the worst might befall did the Cabinet in fact feel, that Grey warned the First Lord of the Admiralty that the fleet might be attacked at any moment without warning. The German Ambassador has told us that, in the first weeks of August, his country was ~~actively~~ considering the possibility of declaring war. ~~Again~~ in September, Grey issued his warning to the

Admiralty. Finally, in the closing weeks of the year, an agreement was arrived at between Germany and France ; and the British Government could breathe freely for yet another while.

Certain consequences resulted in this country from the Agadir crisis. One was, that Lloyd George came to be more closely identified with the policy of Sir Edward Grey, and to be more keenly interested in international affairs. During the weeks of tension, the Prime Minister had invited him, as well as Churchill, who was still at the Home Office, to attend meetings of the Committee of Imperial Defence. Another consequence was, that the fact that "conversations" had taken place between British and French military experts became for the first time known to the Cabinet as a whole. There was instantly an outcry on the part of certain Ministers against these "commitments", with regard to which, they complained, they had been kept in the dark. The serious dilemma which caused so much trouble in the closing days of July, 1914, was, in fact, beginning to reveal itself: if no concerted action between England and France were to be planned, then their ability to resist a German attack would be enormously decreased; but, on the other hand, the mere fact of planning a campaign on the hypothesis that England and France would find themselves fighting against Germany would help to precipitate that catastrophe. It was obviously the sort of dilemma which might reasonably divide able and sincere men; and that is precisely what did happen in the British Cabinet.

In planning the course to be adopted in the event of war breaking out in the summer of 1911, there had been much friction between the War Office and the Admiralty. Asquith has plaintively, but very truly, remarked that "it is the common belief that when naval or military questions

arise, a Prime Minister has nothing to do but deliver himself into the hands of experts who will decide for him; but much more often he finds himself called upon to decide between rival experts advocating contradictory propositions on equal authority". The consequence of the friction which had developed between Haldane and McKenna was momentous: the Prime Minister transferred the latter to the Home Office, and made Winston Churchill First Lord of the Admiralty. For the change (for better or worse, who can tell?) Lloyd George was at least partly responsible. He and Churchill were as mutually sympathetic as he and McKenna were antipathetic. In August, when the international crisis was at its height, he visited Asquith at Archerfield, and urged him to make Churchill First Lord. McKenna had strongly opposed the proposal to send an expeditionary force to France; and as Asquith believed that the War Office had been right in recommending such a course, and saw moreover that no war could ever be won with an Admiralty and a War Office disagreeing on the fundamentals of strategy, he reluctantly agreed to make the change.

The episode of the Mansion House speech draws aside a curtain, and reveals to us a Lloyd George whose existence at that time, but for it, we might never have guessed at. For so engrossed was he in his Insurance Act, and in problems of domestic policy generally, and so exclusively were his speeches of the period occupied with them, that one might easily suppose that he took not the slightest interest in foreign affairs. This speech, however, could not have been made by a man uninterested in the great drama of Germany's bid for world power. Quite obviously, Lloyd George was following every move in the game; and the diplomatic situation which arose in the summer of 1914 could not possibly have come as a surprise to him. The Mansion House speech is also clearly incompatible with

the belief that Lloyd George was a pacifist, a peace-at-any-price man, or a Little Englander. For no Imperialist could have responded more swiftly, or hit back more vigorously, in the face of this threat on the part of Germany to our communications, and to cut off South Africa strategically. Furthermore, Lloyd George, although largely a novice in international affairs, proved by this intervention that he knew precisely at what point Germany must be told to halt. The fire-eater takes umbrage at every forward move on the part of his opponent; but the true statesman does not waste powder and shot on trivialities, but keeps his strength in reserve for the moment when the rival has trespassed beyond the boundary of what is permissible in the interest of his country. To involve great nations in war on account of a trifle like Agadir would, to many people, appear monstrous. But Lloyd George thought otherwise. For, like his firm friend and ardent admirer of later years—General Smuts—he perceived that what Germany was really aiming at was to possess herself of the whole of Africa south of the Zambesi; by linking together her scattered colonies across the centre of the continent, and cutting off the southern half from all assistance from England. A powerful naval or submarine base established at, or near, Agadir would enable the Germans to cut our communications with South Africa. And that being so, no such specious arguments as that Germany ought, in common fairness, to have her slice of Morocco, must be allowed to prevail. In this case, the facts of geography and strategy militated against the claims of abstract justice; and that being so, Lloyd George had no hesitation in taking his stand upon the former. His influence upon British foreign policy was, of course, not very great in those years, for there is this marked difference between the pre-War and the post-War conduct of foreign



affairs: before 1914 the Foreign Secretary did most things on his own initiative; so that policy was essentially *his*; whereas since 1918 the Cabinet as a whole has not only sanctioned policy but also initiated it.

The more extreme Liberals, who, as a rule, constituted Lloyd George's most zealous supporters, were not a little baffled, and even alarmed, by the part which he had played in the Agadir crisis. For it must be realised that probably the majority of the Party were seriously critical of Grey's whole policy. No better illustration of this is to be found than that presented by the attitude of the *Manchester Guardian*, and its famous editor—C. P. Scott. This High Priest of Liberalism was opposed not merely to the details of Grey's policy, but to his whole plan. He was an isolationist, as Salisbury had been in 1901. Our alliance with Japan had found in him a trenchant critic; and he was equally opposed to the Entente with France, holding (quite rightly as events were to prove three years later) that participation in the Continental system would inevitably deprive us of our freedom of action, and necessitate eventually the sending of a great army abroad. The Agadir crisis stirred Scott's wrath; for he regarded our veto upon the acquisition by Germany of a station in Morocco as in every way unjustifiable, and he was horrified by the prospect of a war in such a cause. On July 20th, 1911, he wrote to Asquith to protest against the Government's policy. "There is", he declared, "no feeling among Liberals here against Germany—it is generally recognised that her policy of the open door in Morocco has even been of material service to us—and that there would be any deadly danger to our interests in her acquiring a West African port would be wholly disbelieved. I can imagine no more foolish war and none more fatal alike to Party and to national interests than one with Germany on this matter."

No Liberal Government could afford to disregard criticism emanating from the editorial office of the *Manchester Guardian*, and Scott, moreover, was one of the very few journalists for whom Asquith felt sincere respect. The Prime Minister and Lloyd George were perturbed by Scott's letter, for they knew that not only was he voicing the opinion of the great majority of Liberals in the country, but also of several influential members of the Cabinet. They both sent messages to him imploring him to write nothing in the *Manchester Guardian* until they had seen him, and begging him to come to London without delay. He went; and there followed a series of interviews with Asquith, Lloyd George, and Grey. Scott writes in his private papers: "Breakfast with L. G. Chief Whip and his brother and Miss L. G. also there; afterwards alone with L. G.; then Churchill joined and Murray came back. Then saw P. M., and lastly some talks with the other three and with L. G. alone before leaving." Lloyd George sought to impress upon him how disastrous it would be for the Liberal Party if it became known that the *Manchester Guardian* and the Cabinet were at loggerheads over a fundamental issue. It would also do much harm internationally, as the Germans were accustomed to search the pages of the great provincial paper for the true expression of the thoughts of Liberal England. He went on to explain to Scott the extent of our commitments; and he affirmed his belief that Grey always showed him every important document. Next he explained fully the Government's attitude towards the international situation in general, pointing out the immensity of Britain's interests in Africa, which must not be put in jeopardy strategically; declaring emphatically that England must not tolerate incivility from a bully like Germany; and finally, painting a picture of the fear of Germany felt in France, whose eyes were always fixed on "those

terrible legions across the frontier". Nevertheless, both Lloyd George and Asquith agreed that Germany's desire for expansion in Africa ought to be satisfied, provided a way could be discovered which would not amount to placing in her hands the keys to the British Empire.

From all these discussions two things became perfectly clear—viz. (1) There was among such able and well-informed Liberals as C. P. Scott at that time a profound suspicion that Grey's policy was leaning too far in the direction of France, with the inevitable consequence that it encouraged the French Government to resist obstinately every project for Germany's expansion. (2) Lloyd George was in full possession of the whole data relating to the international situation, and in complete agreement with Grey about it. And that being so, it becomes apparent that the rift between him and the present vein of British Liberal thought in foreign politics was already beginning to widen. For a brief while in the first half of 1914 it appeared to close, when Lloyd George again assumed the role of critic of our armaments policy; but the Prime Minister of the "knock out blow" of 1918 was, in fact, the logical development of the Chancellor of the Exchequer who made the Mansion House speech in 1911.

Foreign crises are not unfrequently linked to difficulties at home; and the Agadir episode was no exception to that rule. A great railway strike broke out in England in August, and so threatening did the situation appear, that the troops had been ordered to stand by. The Kaiser felt fully convinced that England was on the verge of a great industrial convulsion; and that belief, which no doubt was the child of hope, tended not a little to stiffen his attitude over Morocco. Of that the British Cabinet were well aware. Indeed, at one point in the struggle, when negotiations between the Prime Minister and the railwaymen's leaders

had broken down, Lloyd George sent for J. H. Thomas to a private interview, and informed him of the fact. And so impressed were both politicians with the gravity of the international situation, that a new and vigorous effort was made to settle the strike—an effort which in a few hours' time proved successful, mainly owing to the skill in negotiation of Lloyd George himself.

This railway strike of August, 1911, was much the most serious industrial dispute that England had ever known. No preparations had been made (such as had been made in 1926) to cope with a situation in which the whole system of transport would have ceased to operate; and the community would consequently, if the strike were to last many days, be faced not only with a shortage in the necessities of life, but actually with starvation. This essential difference between the strike and all previous ones did not escape the knowledge of the Government; and the Cabinet came to the decision at once that it had two duties to discharge: (1) To use all its influence in order to bring masters and men to an agreement. (2) To employ all its power, including the military forces, to protect, so far as possible, the essential services of the nation. Much play was made in Labour speeches with Asquith's declaration that he would "employ all the forces of the Crown to keep the railways open". Keir Hardie distorted the statement into a threat to shoot down all strikers; and it was only under a fierce cross-examination by Lloyd George in the House of Commons that he admitted that this blood-thirsty threat was his own gloss upon the Prime Minister's words. Where rioting took place troops were, in fact, employed; and in one district four men were killed. But determined though they were to protect the community from starvation and to suppress violent disorder, the sympathies of both Asquith and Lloyd George were with

the strikers, for they believed that the men were underpaid and overworked.

An event of considerable political importance in the autumn of 1911 was the deposition of Balfour from the Conservative leadership, and the appointment of Bonar Law to take his place. Balfour had never been forgiven by the extreme Tariff Reformers for the lukewarm manner in which he had accepted their creed. And the disastrous bungling over the Budget and the Parliament Act, with two General Elections fought and lost, made the Conservative Party eager to find some kind of scapegoat. They found it in Balfour, whose hesitations, philosophic doubts, cleverness, comparatively mild methods of political combat, and warm friendship with leading Liberals, were all repugnant to Tory campaigners tired of the wilderness of Opposition, and intensely eager to close the floodgates of "socialist" legislation. Balfour, they felt convinced, lacked those fighting qualities which alone could give them the victory. This verdict on their old leader was an exceedingly unfair one, for it was the conviction of every foe, if not of every friend of the Opposition, that no man could have done more, or even perhaps as much, to raise the Party from the depths into which it had sunk in 1906, to infuse new hope into it, and to keep it, though small in numbers, on the highest level of debating efficiency. The natural choice of the Party, after the resignation of Balfour, would have fallen upon either Walter Long or Austen Chamberlain—both mediocre in talent, dull and insipid in speech, but of an unimpeachable Tory orthodoxy; the former a typical country gentleman of the kind which the Tory Party had always delighted in; the latter the heir to the immense reputation of the prophet of Tariff Reform. It never occurred to the caucus to elect the young F. E. Smith—far and away the finest political intelligence, the ablest

debater, and the most powerful platform speaker within their ranks, Balfour alone excepted. Unfortunately, it proved impossible to decide between the modest qualifications of Walter Long and the equally modest ones of Austen Chamberlain; and so, with that splendid instinct for preserving the unity of the Party which has stood Conservatives so often in good stead, they decided to pass over both, and to elect Bonar Law.

The new Conservative leader was a typical business man, a Tory by intellectual conviction and class interest rather than by sentiment or tradition. In fact he knew little, and cared little, for those things—the land, the Church, the aristocracy—which were the very Ark of the Covenant in the eyes of the average Conservative. He was shrewd, with a narrow, though lucid, mind, considerable fluency of speech, the ability to make long and valuable contributions to debate without the use of a note, and a tongue which, if it could not frame sarcasms or invective, could at least scold. He came to his post with all the traditional intentions of the new broom; determined that where Balfour had been vague, he would be precise; that where Balfour had been courteous, he would be rude; that where Balfour had been conciliatory, he would be obstinate and uncompromising. Without delay he introduced into Parliamentary debates what Asquith, half-jokingly and half-scornfully, described as “the new style”. In the terminology of this style the Government were “Artful Dodgers”, “Gadarene Swine”, “Humbugs”, and “Tricksters”; and the Prime Minister was plainly told that he “had no principles”. It was part of the finest tradition of our public life that opponents in politics should be real friends everywhere else—golfing together, meeting at the same social and literary clubs, and around the same dinner tables. Asquith, Balfour, Rosebery, Haldane,

Curzon, and Morley had all belonged to a particularly friendly circle; and they took no account whatever in private of the deep and real differences which divided them in Parliament and on the platform. The austere Bonar Law, however, would have none of this fraternising with the enemy. He played golf regularly at Walton Heath, but he was quite frank in declaring that he considered it to be his duty not to play with Lloyd George, or Rufus Isaacs, or Winston Churchill, all of whom were also members of the same club. A few months before Bonar Law became Conservative leader, a club called "The Other Club" had been founded by Churchill and F. E. Smith, with the express purpose of bringing together on friendly neutral territory men who respected one another though they belonged to different political parties. In addition to Smith and Churchill, other prominent men, such as Lloyd George, Bonar Law, Seely, Knollys, Kitchener, de Soveral, Northcliffe, Buckmaster, Max Aitken, and Riddell, were members. But the club was suspect in the eyes of the new leader. "I think the club will have to be disbanded," he remarked to Riddell. "I don't think it wise to continue it." "Personally," he declared on another occasion, "on the whole, I think these political friendships have been carried too far and have caused suggestions of insincerity which do not really exist, but it pays to avoid the appearance of evil. I like Lloyd George. He is a nice man, but the most dangerous little man that ever lived." It is only fair to add that Lloyd George, for his part, also liked Bonar Law. Commenting on his appointment as Balfour's successor he said: "The Conservatives have done a wise thing for once. They have selected the very best man—the only man. He is a clever fellow and has a nice disposition, and I like him very much. He has a good brain."

There can be little doubt that Bonar Law was wrong in the view he took of the necessity of choosing one's friends from among members of one's own Party. Democratic government can only function where, in spite of the fact that men have deeply-rooted convictions, they are willing good-humouredly to give and take. The system breaks down altogether if the acerbity often inseparable from the clash of policies, goes beyond a certain point. It is the fact that a background of friendship has generally existed behind all our political struggles that has prevented them from degenerating into vendettas, or even armed conflicts. That safeguard Bonar Law's theory would go far to destroy ; and there was, in fact, in the two years which intervened between his election to the leadership and the outbreak of the Great War, ample evidence of the havoc which the new spirit of intolerance was working in our constitutional system. When Tory hostesses refused to receive into their houses men like Asquith, Grey, Haldane, and Crewe, because they were in favour of Home Rule, and when their husbands threatened to disobey the law, and even incited the Army to disobey orders, it was largely because the unhappy spirit which a good leader, caring more for his country than even for his Party, ought to have striven with might and main to subdue, was approved and fostered by Bonar Law. For the disastrous sequence of events in Ireland, between 1912 and 1922, and indirectly for the outbreak of the Great War itself, posterity will hold Bonar Law accountable.



## CHAPTER FIFTEEN

### THE LAST YEARS OF PEACE [1912-1914]

THE last two years of peace were, in contrast with the tumultuous years which preceded them, almost a period of repose in the career of Lloyd George. It was as if a watchful and beneficent Providence had determined to give him rest before launching him on the four most strenuous years of his life. With the Insurance Act he had completed the first great instalment of the emancipation which he was planning for the poor and the unfortunate. The Liberal Party felt that they had done a good day's work in the field of social reform; and that now the time had arrived for passing those measures—notably Irish Home Rule and Welsh Disestablishment—which had been for so many years on the programme, but whose way to the Statute Book had hitherto been blocked by the veto of the House of Lords. The road was now clear; and if those measures could be passed by the Commons in the course of 1912, there would, if no ill chance befell, be time for the Parliament Act to operate in their favour before the statutory term of the present Parliament had come to an end. Whether, when these measures had become law, there was to be any more social legislation, was a question to which the Party as a whole, and the majority of the Cabinet, had not given a thought. Lloyd George, however, was pondering the situation in his heart; and with some misgiving. As he admitted more than once to his closest friends, he had lost most of his enthusiasm for

Home Rule and Disestablishment. The coercion of Ulster was repugnant to him; savouring as it did of what had always been for him one of the deadliest of political crimes—the oppression of a small nation. Disestablishment he was certainly in favour of; but he had lost most of his early hostility towards the Church, and was willing to support an honourable compromise. The truth seems to be that his impatient and forward-looking mind resented the waste of time entailed by a further protracted discussion of the old controversies. Everything that could be said about them had already been said, and that many times over. He was longing to march forward into new political territory, particularly to deal in comprehensive manner with the problem of the land. There were also very grave labour problems thrusting themselves upon the attention of statesmen—conditions of work, minimum wage, relations between employers and employed generally, and many others. Lloyd George could see that Liberalism was losing its hold upon the masses, and that more than ever was there a need to do something big, and to do it quickly, if it was to remain the workers' creed and the workers' party. His mind has always been one of those which can only properly devote themselves to one subject at a time. That has been his strength and his weakness. He has possessed the power of throwing himself heart and soul into the policy of the moment, as if nothing else in the world mattered at all. This quality has given him enormous driving power, and enabled him to get things done in a short time which, in the eyes of statesmen prone to dissipate their energies and thought, would appear impossible. But on the other hand, it has given him an air of fickleness and inconsistency; for after hotly pressing a policy for a time, he has seemed to tire of it, and to go off hotly after another, and sometimes even a contradictory one. Colleagues have often found his

ways in this respect intensely irritating; and it was this irritation which prompted one of them to remark: "George can launch beautiful ships; but he seldom sees any of them into port." Taken literally the criticism implied was obviously unfair; for no living statesman had piloted so many important measures on to the Statute Book; but it did contain a certain amount of truth. In 1912 the problem of the worker, both agricultural and industrial, was engrossing all his attention, and old comrades-in-arms in such things as the fight for Disestablishment were bitterly bemoaning the fact that he had deserted them. To some extent, of course, their complaint was just. He had not ceased to believe in Disestablishment (he was, in fact, about to make a series of speeches on its behalf which would carry it to ultimate victory); but he longed to settle it quickly, in order that the Government might hurry to devote itself to questions which, by that time, had come to occupy a much larger place in his mind.

The Government proceeded, according to plan, to put Home Rule and Welsh Disestablishment through the House of Commons; but the time was not destined to be the placid one which they had hoped for. Early in 1912 came the first rude intimation that things were far from well in the industrial world, in the form of the great miners' strike, which raised the issue of the minimum wage. On January 10th, the Miners Federation held a ballot of its members to decide whether notice should be given "to establish the principle of an individual minimum wage for every man and boy working underground in any district in Great Britain"; and an immense majority voted in favour of such a course. The notices would expire on February 29th, and in the weeks remaining before that date the Government strove hard to bring men and owners to an understanding, and so avert a complete strike over all the coalfields of

England, Wales, and Scotland, with its inevitable consequence, should it last long enough, of a total stoppage in industry and transport. On behalf of the Government, the negotiations were in the hands of Asquith, Lloyd George, Grey, and Sydney Buxton. The Prime Minister told the owners quite candidly that he considered the men's demand of a minimum wage perfectly reasonable. But he was not in favour of the principle of Parliament fixing any specific sum. Instead, he suggested that a Bill should be passed, providing that a minimum wage should be fixed for the various districts at conferences between the parties, presided over by an independent chairman appointed by the Government. This suggestion, however, was rejected by both sides; notwithstanding which fact, Asquith at once introduced the Bill, and got it passed by both Houses within a week. The Conservative Party and the Labour Party voted against it. The Bill did, in fact, end the strike; for although a majority of the strikers were still in favour of holding out, the minority opposed to that course was so large that the leaders deemed it wise to order a resumption of work.

Not long after, the question of a minimum wage for agricultural labourers emerged into prominence; though that ill-used member of the community, lacking the all-powerful organisations which backed the endeavours of the industrial workers to better their conditions, had to depend almost wholly for support upon the disinterested efforts of others. Among the labourers' friends none was more prominent or sincere than Lloyd George. The Chancellor of the Exchequer, it must be borne in mind, had spent all the most impressionable years of his life in a wholly agricultural district. There was no need to tell him of the sort of life which the farm labourer led—he was familiar from childhood with the kind of cottage in which he lived, the

kind of food he ate, the clothes he wore, the hours he worked, the money he earned, and the recreations and amusements which were within his reach. Long before 1912 Lloyd George had made up his mind that all these things were a disgrace. The lot of the labourer on the rich farms of England was hardly, if at all, better than that of his fellow on the poor farms of North Wales. It was time now to turn from the industrial worker, and to do something for the placid man who toiled so patiently on the land.

When he broached the subject of land reform to his colleagues in the Cabinet, Lloyd George found, to his great disgust, that there was but little enthusiasm for any serious and comprehensive scheme. Some members of the Government were themselves great landowners, jealous of their privileges, and most unwilling to have them tampered with. Others were professional men, town dwellers in every sense, knowing nothing about the conditions of the agricultural worker, and hardly, if at all, conscious of the fact that the countryside was rapidly falling into decay. The only prominent colleague in perfect sympathy with Lloyd George in this matter was Grey. It was not always that these two men, so dissimilar in upbringing, character, temperament, and tastes, had seen eye to eye; but since Agadir they were in perfect agreement on foreign policy; and on the pressing labour disputes of 1912 there was no difference either in their views.

Looking back at that year 1912, we can now see that it was a sort of death-bed of the old Liberal Party. A few men, like Lloyd George, felt at the time that something was very wrong, without quite being able to put their finger on the cause. All the records which we possess of the Chancellor's private conversation at the time indicate that he was feeling restless and dissatisfied with the course which politics were taking. "I don't know exactly what I am,"

he burst out one day, in the hearing of Masterman, "but I am sure I am not a Liberal. They have no sympathy with the people." Once again he reverted to the possibility of a Coalition, wondering whether there were not enough keen young Tories, eager for bold measures of social reform, to unite with such Liberals as were impatient to advance swiftly. Much less than formerly the Conservative Party were now dominated by the landed interest: it was a party of wealthy men, it is true, but the rich were now being drawn in far larger proportion from the ranks of industry and the professions. The Liberal Party had its wealthy landowners; but it was pre-eminently the Party of rich manufacturers, merchants, shopkeepers, and professional men. Obviously both Parties were representative of the prosperous and wealthy. The Prime Minister himself, though a self-made man, had early in life been received into the most select society in England. His place was with the comfortable classes; and he had not the slightest first-hand knowledge of the lives of the common people. Nor did his political philosophy (that of a good Manchester Liberal) encourage him to use his intellect in order to make good what he lacked in experience.

The truth seems to be that the Liberal Party, by the end of 1912, had completed its task, and fulfilled its appointed role in English history. Born in the turbulent seventeenth century, its mission had been to defeat royal and aristocratic privilege, and to win for the middle classes full political and economic equality. In some countries the progress of revolution is swift, the complete inversion of a social hierarchy taking place within a few years, or even a few months. But in England the process had already lasted more than two centuries when the twentieth century opened; for as recently as 1894 it was possible for a hereditary Sovereign to treat a man of Gladstone's position with

discourtesy ; a hereditary Upper House could still frustrate reforms repeatedly demanded by the people ; there was still a restricted electorate, from which many men and all women were excluded, and which gave several votes to the rich man, with one, and even none at all, to the poor ; and there yet existed a social system wholly contrived in the interests of a few hundred thousands of the better born. All these things were ludicrous anachronisms ; and until they had been remedied there was a reason for the continued existence of a Liberal Party, a unifying principle to preserve its identity, and a goal for its endeavours upon which practically all its members were in agreement. It was Asquith's supreme role to abolish the Veto of the House of Lords ; for until that was done, the trading and manufacturing middle classes had only half won their battle against the landed feudal interests. In his own person Asquith represented the new middle class ; and his concern was wholly with the legacy of middle-class grievances which had come down to him in the great Liberal tradition. Until its own mission was accomplished, the Liberal Party had to bargain for the support of other classes and interests, paying a price for that support in the form of such measures as Irish Home Rule, Welsh Disestablishment, and the National Insurance Act—none of which had any connection with its main historic mission.

By 1912 the Liberal Party's mission was accomplished : the great enemy—the Lords' Veto—lay broken at its feet ; and the overdue crowd of measures hitherto prevented from becoming law by that obstacle were now well on their way to the Statute Book. Unperceived by most people at the time ; unperceived, indeed, largely owing to the Great War and its aftermath, for many years afterwards ; that was the end of historic Liberalism. With no longer a mission, an accepted goal, or an agreed programme, the Party began

at once to split up into groups. On both sides the dividing walls had fallen—the wall between moderate Liberals and moderate Conservatives, and the wall between extreme Liberals and moderate Labour men. The consequence was that both the Parties which still possessed a *raison d'être*, began to detach members from the rapidly dwindling Liberal Party. There is good reason for calling Asquith the last of the great Liberals: he was the last, and also one of the greatest, because he fulfilled the historic mission of his Party. By fulfilling it he also signed its death-warrant. All that remained was a vague "liberal" sentiment; and that found as sincere and eloquent a voice in Mr. Baldwin as in any member of the organised Liberal Party of the post-War years. The politicians fighting hard in the dust of the arena in 1912 did not, and could not, see things as we see them; and so there was no break-up of the Government until it came to be overwhelmed by the War. There still remained for it several tasks to perform—passing the Home Rule and the Welsh Disestablishment Bills into law, dealing with the Women's Suffrage problem, launching a Land Campaign, and attempting a new electoral reform. And while these engrossing tasks were being grappled with, there were side issues (such as the Ulster "rebellion" and the Marconi scandal) which made their work a great deal more difficult than it otherwise would have been.

Here it is only necessary to allude to the part played by Lloyd George in these affairs. Although his intimate friends knew that he was politically ill at ease, no outsider could have guessed from his conduct that he was a less ardent supporter of his Party than he used to be. He was more conciliatory than in the old days, more eager to discover points of agreement with opponents, fonder of pointing out that many of the reforms which he was advocating were common ground to sensible and progressive members of all



Parties: but this change in him people attributed to the mellowing effects of time, and that *savoir-faire* which long years in high office gives to the majority of men. Irish Home Rule he left almost entirely to the Prime Minister to handle; and no one could have handled it more skilfully. It was not Asquith's fault that the Parties found themselves in the dilemma that a Liberal Government conferring Home Rule would find itself confronted with a rebellion in Ulster, and that a Tory Government withdrawing Home Rule would find itself confronted with a rebellion in Southern Ireland. But Lloyd George could not refuse to strike a blow for Welsh Disestablishment without recanting some of his earliest and deepest convictions, betraying the people who had trusted and made him, and mortally wounding a host of old friends, foremost among them his uncle. There is, in fact, no reason for supposing that he wished to avoid striking the blow. It is true that he was impatient to get this hoary controversy out of the way; but only by victory for the cause of Disestablishment. He was as convinced as ever of the justice of the Welsh claim.

As usual, where Disestablishment was concerned, the Government showed signs of wavering, for the forces antagonistic to the measure were very powerful, and the English electorate at best strictly neutral. Once again Wales rose in wrath to threaten the Cabinet. Conventions were summoned, and something of the old enthusiasm for the cause was aroused. People felt that it was a case of now or never; for the race of persecuting parsons was rapidly vanishing from Wales; and hostility towards the Establishment, although not being replaced by affection, was certainly calming down into indifference. The great industrial regions of Wales were far more interested in economic problems, and beginning to swing very definitely in the direction of Labour politics. No doubt the Labour

Party would vote for Disestablishment, but it would not deem it worth while to inscribe it on its banners. His own country called upon Lloyd George to perform for it one last service before passing over entirely into the service of the Empire; and it did not call in vain.

No sooner did Lloyd George again take up the cause of Disestablishment than he recaptured much of the enthusiasm which it had stirred within him in earlier days. He not only remembered the old arguments; he seemed also to be able to think the old thoughts, and to enter into the old feelings. At least two of the speeches in favour of Disestablishment which he made in the debate on the Bill in the House of Commons are Lloyd George at his very best—cogent in argument, devastating in reply, showing complete familiarity with the subject, enormously combative, and movingly eloquent. Never before, perhaps, and certainly never afterwards, did he speak better. The case as he presented it was the nationalist case—a free people, a nation in fact and in belief, expressing over a long succession of years a wellnigh unanimous desire for a particular policy. It did not matter very much whether Disestablishment was in itself good or bad; it was enough that the Welsh people wanted it; and to deny it would be not only a repudiation of democracy, but also a repudiation of the claim of Wales to be a nation. The House was greatly impressed by his eloquence and determination, and the Bill was passed with the full Government majority.

While the fate of the Disestablishment Bill was still uncertain, meetings were held in every part of Wales, for no one in Parliament must be given any excuse for saying that the Welsh people no longer desired the measure with the old enthusiasm. Wonderful meetings many of them were—a kind of glorious sunset of Welsh Liberalism. To one of them, held at Caernarvon, Lloyd George was invited.

Ten thousand people can be seated in the Pavilion; and long before the hour for the meeting the building was besieged by enormous crowds seeking admission. Excursion trains had been pouring their loads into the old town since early morning; and the thousands who failed to get inside the Pavilion lined the streets in order to see, and to cheer, their hero as he passed. Had they only known it, this was to be Lloyd George's last big meeting with his own people, to talk about the great causes for which he and they had been fighting for a quarter of a century. The chair was taken by the greatest of living Welsh preachers—the Reverend John Williams of Brynsiencyn—a man for whose matchless oratory Lloyd George entertained unbounded admiration. As was almost always the case in pre-War days when Lloyd George addressed a Welsh audience, the atmosphere of the meeting was electrical. From laughter to tears, from indignation to triumph, the vast audience was moved to and fro, sometimes apparently by a mere gesture of the great speaker in one of his inspired moods. At one moment the audience rose to its feet, cheering frantically. It was when Lloyd George had been excusing himself for the bitterness of his recent House of Commons speeches, a bitterness for which he had been taken to task in some quarters. "It is because I love Wales so dearly," he cried, "and when they insult her I cannot refrain from hitting back." The speech went on, rising to higher and higher flights of eloquence like the soaring of an eagle, until a sublime peroration was reached, one of those passages based on familiar scriptural words and imagery which in Lloyd George's hands used never to fail to sweep a Welsh audience off its feet. To translate it is to strain away the flavour which the Welsh words alone possess; but literally the short peroration may be rendered as follows: "The Archbishop of Canterbury was in this hall the other day

He came to invite the sheep back into the old fold. 'Let bygones be bygones, and come back' was his appeal. But the sheep will not go back. The winter has been too long; the storm has been too severe. They have found for themselves green pastures. True, they are not as yet beside the still waters. They still stand beside the mountain torrents. But of one thing they have no doubt—that *He* is leading them." To these words, spoken in Welsh, add the speaker's thrilling tones, the flashing eyes, the uplifted arm, with the gigantic audience keyed up to the highest pitch of emotional fervour, and the effects of this great oratorical effort may easily be imagined.

The Welsh Church Bill was introduced in the House of Commons on April 23rd, 1912, by the Home Secretary, Reginald McKenna, who was powerfully assisted by the witty and brilliant Welshman who was at the time his Under-Secretary—Ellis Jones Griffith. Dislike of the measure was far less intense than it had been when Asquith introduced the first Disestablishment Bill seventeen years before. Quite rightly, the main argument turned upon whether Wales was or was not a nation; for if she was, then no one could justly refuse to allow her to disestablish a Church which three-quarters of her population regarded with aversion, and which was alien to the whole spirit of the country. In spite of eloquent appeals from Lord Hugh Cecil, who argued that an Established Church is good *per se*, and that if the Anglican Church were to be disestablished in Wales, no other denomination could be chosen to fill its place, the Bill passed all its readings. It hardly needs to be added that the House of Lords rejected the Bill (incidentally as complete a justification as need be found of the policy of the Parliament Act!) as they did again when it was presented to them in the following year. But in 1914 it automatically became law, in their despite. The Liberal

Party had, at long last, kept faith with Wales; though even in 1913 the Cabinet were wavering, and considering the advisability of dropping the Bill; and it appears as if only McKenna's threat of resignation if the measure were not proceeded with decided the issue in favour of Disestablishment. It is with both pain and surprise that one fails to discover that Lloyd George used any such threat.

Over the Disestablishment clauses of the Bill there was more compromising than the sterner Nonconformists of Wales relished in their hearts: still, it was realised that obstruction would be unpopular with the vast majority, who were only too anxious to see this old controversy settled and cleared out of the way. There were in Wales, both in the Established and in the Free Churches, young men who were striving hard to bury the hatchet, and to begin to work amicably together for the common good of religion. And when the Great War came, concessions to the Church in the financial field were freely made, with but few voices raised in protest.

The Disestablishment and Disendowment of the Church of England in Wales was a great act of justice; and its benefits have been experienced by the formerly Established Church no less than by the Nonconformist bodies. Indeed, one of the most wonderful and hopeful things in the recent history of Wales is the way in which the new Welsh Church has organised itself, and adapted itself to the new situation. It is now a truly national body, with its own Archbishop, and a thoroughly democratic constitution in which the lay element counts for as much as the clerical. But far and away the biggest gain for Wales has been the healing of the festering sore of this old controversy, poisoning as it had been doing for two generations at least not only the religious life of the Principality but everything else as well.

The many other difficulties which Ministers had to contend with in 1912 were intensified by the movement in favour of women's suffrage, which began to take the form of violent attacks upon property, and even upon the persons of prominent statesmen on the part of militant Suffragettes. Manhood suffrage had wellnigh been achieved; but the political enfranchisement of women had not begun, and the incongruity of the situation was becoming every year more glaring, on account of the successes won by women in other spheres—education, the professions, and even business. It was an issue which cut across the ordinary Party boundaries; and for that reason it could not find a place in the Government programme. Campbell-Bannerman and Balfour were both favourable to the women's cause; but Asquith was against, less, perhaps, from any deep intellectual conviction than from sentiment. The militant methods of the Suffragettes alienated the sympathies of M.P.s; and for the first time in twenty years Women Suffrage Bills were rejected by the House of Commons in 1910 and 1911. The Liberal Government was itself divided over the question; and Asquith had decreed that the rule of Cabinet responsibility must be suspended, and each Minister allowed to vote as he pleased. He even gave facilities to private Members to propose amendments, tacking on Women's Suffrage to the Government's Franchise Bill of 1912, leaving such amendments to a free vote of the House. As it turned out, it was this course which wrecked the Bill, for the Speaker ruled that the amendments made it a new Bill. Bowing to the inevitable, Asquith withdrew the whole measure. Lloyd George was a supporter of the women's claims in their widest form; and for that reason he was pursued and harried by the Suffragettes with unrelenting rancour. For it pleased those viragoes to regard a frank opponent as entitled to immunity

from molestation; towards a Minister who believed in their cause, and yet would not set it above all else and resign his seat in the Cabinet for its sake, they displayed unremitting hostility. They were very logical; for the more influential the Minister, the more did they persecute him. It is not surprising, therefore, that Lloyd George should have suffered more at their hands than any other statesman of the day. At Glasgow, in 1907, he had received a deputation of women, to whom he had clearly pointed out that no measure for the enfranchisement of women could be introduced until the question had been first before the country in definite and concrete form. He reminded them that in politics men had always had to go slowly, "educating" their fellows in every policy which they desired to see made into law. He frankly avowed his own belief in the justice of their cause: "It is", he declared, "such an obviously reasonable thing that I cannot conceive the right of man to deny it." For every one of the many Private Members' Bills designed to give votes to women, he consistently voted. Those things, however, did not count for him for righteousness; and from early in 1908 his meetings were almost invariably subjected to interruption, often so persistent and organised on so big a scale as to render speaking impossible. For some time he bore it all good-humouredly; then his patience gave way and he began to retort sharply to some of the more audible interjections. "Peace must begin at home by giving votes to women," screamed a suffragette at one of his meetings. "I agree," retorted Lloyd George, "and I hope that that lady's house is peaceable." At this time, however, he invariably used his influence to protect the disturbers from violent treatment at the hands of incensed audiences. In 1910 he voted against the so-called Conciliation Bill, on the ground that it only gave a vote to women possessed

of a household qualification, or a £10 occupation qualification. When interrogated by a deputation of women which sought him out at Criccieth, as to whether he placed the advantage of the Liberal Party above Women's Suffrage, he replied decisively: "I put first the causes I have at heart—Welsh Disestablishment, Land Reform, improvement in the conditions of the masses." His refusal to vote in favour of the Conciliation Bill intensified the fury of the well-to-do women, of whom there was such a large proportion in the ranks of the Suffragettes who would have benefited by it, and his meetings became the scenes of greater violence than ever. Not only in London, but all over the country, and even in little meetings on village greens in Wales, his speeches were punctuated by an unbroken series of interruptions, catcalls, and shrieks. Nor did the women, and their male allies, stop short of physical violence; and on more than one occasion Lloyd George was badly injured by missiles hurled at him. None of these things, however, much as they annoyed him, deterred Lloyd George from giving his support to the policy which was being advocated in so insane a way. In December, 1911, he and Grey came out as what Lady Carlisle described "the fighting champions of the Women's Suffrage cause" at a meeting of the Women's Liberal Federation; but it was only to be shrieked at as "traitors". And on the way out Lloyd George was struck in the face with a stone. So the campaign went on, increasing daily in violence; for audiences which had come together to hear Lloyd George discussing big questions in the political field, soon ceased to be amused by the women's antics, and became thoroughly infuriated. Scenes of incredible violence were sometimes enacted. Women were torn from chairs and balconies to which they had roped themselves, and were carried out, their clothes in shreds, fighting, kicking, and biting with the ferocity of



wild cats. It was a disgraceful episode in our political history which we should do well to forget. Unfortunately it was one more example set of the use of violence in politics, predisposing men and women to the orgy of brute force which the War and its aftermath brought upon us.

His sufferings at the hands of the Suffragettes did Lloyd George's fame no manner of harm. Far otherwise, however, was it with the Marconi scandal of 1912, an episode which all but ended his public career at one stroke. The story begins with rumours which passed from mouth to mouth, and which appeared in the Press, charging certain members of the Government with taking advantage of their official positions to gamble in shares. The Imperial Conference of 1911 had agreed to a resolution in favour of establishing a chain of State-owned wireless stations within the Empire. Licences to construct some stations had already been applied for by the Marconi Company; and it was now invited to tender for the new ones. This tender was accepted by the Postmaster-General in March, 1912, subject to its ratification by the House of Commons when it had been put in the shape of a formal contract. Before the matter had come on for debate, the scandalous rumours had crystalised into two allegations: (1) That certain Ministers had corruptly favoured the Marconi Company, for the reason that its managing director—Mr. Godfrey Isaacs—was the brother of Sir Rufus Isaacs, the Attorney-General. (2) That certain Ministers, making use of the knowledge which they had acquired in their official capacity, had dealt on the Stock Exchange in the shares of the favoured company, thereby making considerable profits for themselves. The first charge was aimed at Herbert Samuel, the Postmaster-General. It was soon proved to be devoid of the slightest foundation; and from the start Asquith recommended him to take no notice of such "scurrilous

rubbish". Much more serious, however, was the second of the charges, which was aimed at Lloyd George, Rufus Isaacs, and the Master of Elibank, who had recently relinquished the office of Chief Government Whip. There had been a rise in the value of Marconi shares from £2 to £9 when the acceptance of their tender was made public; and what the allegation amounted to was that these Ministers, acting upon their inside knowledge, had bought blocks of shares, and pocketed the gains.

When the debate on the Marconi contract took place in the House of Commons, in October, the Government proposed the appointment of a Select Committee—"to investigate the circumstances connected with the negotiation and the completion of the Marconi contract, and to report thereupon, and whether the Agreement is desirable and should be approved". There was not the slightest foundation in fact for any of the current allegations. A few persons, with a laudable desire to have the honour of British Cabinet Ministers above suspicion, may have attached genuine importance to them; but for the most part, the whole body of rumours were being deliberately circulated in the hope of discrediting the Government generally, and its most hated member in particular. The charge against Herbert Samuel was soon refuted. As for the others, they had no difficulty in showing that they had never had any transactions in the shares of the Marconi Company. It is true that they had purchased shares in an American Company; but not until they had satisfied themselves that it had no interest whatsoever in the English Company which had the contract with the Post Office. Unfortunately, by what they subsequently admitted to have been an error of judgment, they neglected to disclose the fact that they had shares in the American Company when speaking in the debate in October, but confined themselves to the actual

allegation under discussion. Their conduct was very foolish; for if, as was extremely likely, knowledge of the American transactions were to transpire, their silence with regard to it would be open to serious misconstruction. That is precisely what did happen; for in the course of a libel action brought, in February, 1913, by Herbert Samuel and Rufus Isaacs against the Paris paper, *Le Matin*, which had repeated the charges, it was disclosed that Isaacs, Lloyd George and the Master of Elibank had obtained shares in the American Company.

The disclosure of this unsuspected fact, when it had been assumed that Ministers had made a clean breast of it in the Commons debate four months earlier, caused damaging rumours to revive; and so serious a view did the Select Committee take of the situation, that it failed to arrive at a unanimous report. The majority report adopted by eight votes to six, held that the charges were "absolutely untrue", and that the accused had acted throughout "in the sincere belief that there was nothing in their action which would in any way conflict with their duty as Ministers of the Crown". But the minority, however, while agreeing that the Ministers must be acquitted on all the charges which had led to the appointment of the Select Committee, nevertheless held that their purchase of the American Marconi Company's shares was a "grave impropriety".

Soon after the publication of this report, the Opposition moved a vote of censure on the three Ministers concerned, basing it on two grounds: (1) Their transactions in the shares of the American Company. (2) Their "want of frankness" in their communications on the subject to the House in October. The ensuing debate was a disagreeable one. Balfour took the high line that British public life must be above all possible suspicion of corruption; and there can be no doubt that it was the public

interest, and that alone, which he had in mind. With Bonar Law, however, it was otherwise; and no one could fail to realise that his aim was to make the maximum of Party gain out of the scandal, and to bring about, if possible, the downfall of the most formidable member of the Government, by making the people perceive what feet of clay their idol possessed. The vote of censure was defeated by 346 votes to 268; and an amendment was accepted to the effect that the House, after listening to the speeches of the accused, "accepts their expressions of regret that such purchases were made, and that they were not mentioned in the debate of October 11th, acquits them of acting otherwise than in good faith, and reprobates the charges of corruption brought against Ministers which have been proved to be wholly false". Asquith, who in those days dominated the House completely, not only by his intellectual superiority, but no less in virtue of his unquestioned nobility and integrity of character, used the occasion to lay down certain precepts which ought to govern all financial transactions entered into by Ministers of the Crown. He enunciated five rules, which he termed "Rules of Obligation", none of which had been broken in the present case. But he quite frankly went on to say that there were other rules—"Rules of Prudence"—which it was not so clear that the accused had observed. "One of these rules", he declared, "is that in these matters such persons should carefully avoid all transactions which can give colour or countenance to the belief that they are doing anything which the Rules of Obligation forbid. It was that rule, which I call a Rule of Prudence, which in my opinion, and in the opinion of my right honourable friends and colleagues, was not fully observed, though with complete innocence of intention, in this case. It has always been my opinion, and it is their opinion, as they told the House quite frankly

in the fullest and most manly way. I have been as frank as my right honourable friends were frank in acknowledging what both they and I think was a mistake in judgment. But their honour, both their private and their public honour, is at this moment absolutely unstained. They have, as this committee has shown by its unanimous verdict, abused no public trust. They retain, I can say this with full assurance, the complete confidence of their colleagues and of their political associates."

At no moment did the splendidly chivalrous and loyal character of Asquith shine with a brighter lustre than in the course of this unpleasant Marconi episode. It is obvious that he held the political careers of his erring colleagues in the hollow of his hand: a word from him would have banished them from public life for ever. A smaller man, a man given to jealousy, might have spoken that word. For it must have been evident to him that Lloyd George had won the greater measure of popularity in the Party; and realising both his popularity and his power, he must often have been a thorn in Asquith's side. But not for a moment did such calculations weigh with the Prime Minister. He had it within his power to destroy for ever this rival near the throne, and to do so by a method which would actually enhance his own reputation for the sternest public virtue. Such a thought probably never so much as entered Asquith's mind: what he saw was a colleague unfairly treated; and to come with all his forces to the rescue was for a man of his magnanimity the only possible course to take. No one knew better than Lloyd George himself how near to the abyss of irretrievable political extinction he had been; and while his wrath was justly kindled against opponents who had, regardless of honour and fairplay, done their utmost to hound him out of public life, he was deeply and sincerely grateful to the large-hearted chief who had so

ably and chivalrously interposed his own spotless integrity between him and the shafts of the enemy.

Great was the relief among Liberal Members of Parliament, and throughout the ranks of the Party in the country, at the escape of their champion from destruction. For in 1912 Lloyd George was regarded as the one dynamic force, upon whose working the fate of Liberalism depended. Congratulatory addresses poured in upon him from every quarter. He was welcomed at a dinner at the National Liberal Club; an occasion which he turned to good account by delivering one of those slashing attacks upon the Opposition which Liberals delighted to listen to. Deepest of all was the feeling of relief among his own people in Caernarvonshire. Not for a moment had they lost their faith in him; but they had not lived through the long months during which the Select Committee was investigating the case without some anxiety. They welcomed him at an immense demonstration in Caernarvon Pavilion on a hot afternoon in August. There ten thousand loyal supporters, mostly old friends who had fought by his side from youth upwards, hundreds of them weeping for joy, and all delirious with delight, gave him such an ovation as must have gone far to remove from his mind the bitter feelings created by the cruel words, and the more cruel intent, of his political foes.

It was at this time also that certain libellous statements with regard to his character led to the Chancellor taking legal proceedings. He won his case, and with the substantial damages which he received, built the pleasant and useful village institute with which all visitors to Llanystumdwy are familiar. The land on which it was erected was presented by Sir Hugh Ellis Nanney, Lloyd George's first political opponent. A great crowd assembled on the day of the formal opening; and loud was the applause when the

Chancellor spoke of having "converted the malice of enemies into bricks and mortar for the recreation of the poor". A Welsh concert was held in the new building the same evening; and a packed audience rocked with laughter at Lloyd George's attempts to teach Rufus Isaacs and Masterman, who discharged the duties of chairman alternately, to pronounce the Welsh titles correctly.

It must not be supposed that the whole of Lloyd George's time during those years was occupied with political controversy. There were frequent and regular holidays at Criccieth; and there were several prolonged visits to the popular Bohemian spas. Every year from 1903 to 1909, the political, diplomatic, and fashionable world of London was used to migrate for a month or more to Marienbad or Carlsbad—the two spas, close to one another, beautifully situated amid pine-clad hills, where every known delight, from rigid dieting and vigorous bathing to games and social amenities, were to be enjoyed. The centre of attraction was, of course, King Edward, who, under the name of the Duke of Lancaster, used to spend a month every year at the Hotel Weimar, Marienbad. Ostensibly the King went there to obtain what benefit the medical treatment of the spa could give him, under the direction of the famous Dr. Ernst Ott, friend of Campbell-Bannerman, and of a host of well-known people in half a dozen European lands; but in reality his object was to get away from the formalities and ceremonial which must always surround him in England, and enjoy some of that free and easy life which he loved, in the company of amusing men and pretty women whose social standing would hardly warrant their being received at Windsor or Balmoral. Punctually at eight o'clock every morning His Majesty would be seen drinking his water at the Kreuzbrunnen; and afterwards strolling and chatting informally with his

friends on the Promenade. His affability was boundless ; and although he never, even at Marienbad, forgot that dignity which made it impossible for anybody, however intimate, to take liberties with him, foreigners accustomed to the stiff and unrelaxing etiquette of the courts of Vienna and Berlin marvelled at the almost total absence of ceremony with which British celebrities approached their Sovereign. The King took a lively interest in the development of his favourite spa. A fine golf course was laid out under his patronage. Famous actors and actresses, celebrated singers and instrumentalists, came there to perform. Equally significant was it that the leading tailors of Europe would occupy points of vantage on the Promenade, noting with camera and pencil the latest cut and the latest assortment of colours chosen by the King who was the recognised lord of European fashion. Croquet and shooting were the King's favourite pastimes—the former on the beautifully-kept lawns of Marienbad ; the latter on the estates of the Abbey of Tepl, to which foundation also belonged the medicinal springs. The King would also frequently invite parties of pleasant and distinguished people to lunch, tea, or dinner with him at his hotel. Occasionally he would also be seen (to the no small anxiety of the police—English and Austrian—responsible for his safety) driving in a hired carriage to one of the secluded forest cafés for which Marienbad is famous, there to meet some favourite of the hour—an American actress, a Parisian dancer, or a humble Austrian damsel of exceptional good looks.

Campbell-Bannerman had been a regular visitor to Marienbad long before his Sovereign discovered its charms. Other famous men of the day flocked thither when the King began to make a month's stay there part of his fixed annual programme. Celebrated politicians, like Haldane, Lloyd George, and Rufus Isaacs began to go there regularly.



did sailors like Lord Fisher, actors like Squire Bancroft and Beerbohm Tree, and journalists like Wickham Steed. Nor was there any lack of distinguished men of other nations: Isvolsky, Clemenceau, Kiderlen-Waechter, Mendorff, Kinsky Gallifet, and Benckendorff were all to be seen there during those pleasant years before the War, mixing amusement with "cure", and also now and again with a little politics as well. For there was a tradition, going back to Bismarck and Cavour, in favour of staging diplomatic conversations of a delicate character at one of the famous European spas.

At first Lloyd George seems to have preferred Carlsbad; but later he transferred his loyalty to Marienbad. In truth it did not matter much at which of the two the visitor slept; for they are so near to each other that life at both simultaneously is easy; and to lunch at the one and have tea at the other, became the regular thing. In those years when he was Chancellor of the Exchequer, Lloyd George showed some tendency to obesity; and his purpose in frequenting the Bohemian spas was, in some measure, the serious one of putting himself under the care of Dr. Ott. The success of the prescribed regimen seems to have been complete; for never since has the lithe figure of the famous statesman showed the slightest tendency to deteriorate. But while carrying out the orders of Dr. Ott, Lloyd George also enjoyed the cosmopolitan life of the place, the relative immunity from lion-hunters, and the opportunities of which there were so many of exchanging thoughts with foreigners of note, especially statesmen and journalists. As a rule he was accompanied on these holidays by his intimate friend and colleague, Rufus Isaacs, who at that time was Attorney-General. The two, when they had drunk their prescribed daily portion of the Kreuzbrunnen, would invariably be seen on the golf course; and after a

short midday siesta, drives into the country, afternoon teas, and meetings—some formal, others informal—with foreign celebrities, would follow.

A famous Austrian journalist has left us a brief description of Lloyd George as he then appeared to his fellow-visitors in Bohemia. "Lloyd George", he writes, "was of spare build and extremely vivacious. His small eyes twinkled shrewdly. He had dark chestnut hair slightly tinged with grey, parted on the right and brushed back to the neck, and his light-brown moustache hung down over his lips like a seal's. There was something breezy and extremely natural about him. A personality full of impulsiveness, he at once grasped things whole. A frank, courageous speaker, as he had shown in the House of Commons, and more recently at the Peace Congress, he was also frank and courageous in private conversation. A man of restless energy, I used to see him racing along beside his friend Sir Rufus Isaacs—both of them wrapped in the fluttering green cloaks which were fashionable among the visitors." He goes on to say that the smart Tory ladies, of whom there were many at Marienbad in those days, used to pronounce his name with distaste, some even going the length of refusing to shake hands with him. The more thoughtful members of the Liberal Party, he is, however, careful to add, "spoke of him with respect as one of the outstanding hopes of English politics". The same journalist also records for us the significant and interesting fact that, although from every German visiting Carlsbad and Marienbad nothing was to be heard but talk about the inevitability of a war with England, mingled with complaints about the "encirclement" of Germany, not a word of the kind did he ever hear from English visitors.

On one of these visits Lloyd George had his first meeting with Clemenceau. "The Tiger" used to take a cure

every year at Carlsbad ; and thither, at T. P. O'Connor's invitation, Lloyd George went to meet him. Then, as always, the famous Frenchman was brooding over the wrongs of his country, and longing for the future war of revenge which was to restore the two lost provinces. To " encircle " Germany was his object ; and any talk of reconciliation with the historic enemy of his country was abomination in his eyes. That being so, he was hardly likely to view with favour the Lloyd George of 1910—the man who was known as the leader of the pacifist group in the British Cabinet, the stern critic of a big navy policy, and one who had recently given public expression to his opinion that there need be no enmity between England and Germany. " Agadir " still lay a year ahead ; and the Mansion House speech had not been made. Politeness was never a quality by which Clemenceau laid much store ; and in this interview he did not try to conceal the fact that he thoroughly disapproved of his visitor. " Had I never seen him again," writes Lloyd George, " I should have recalled him as a powerful but a disagreeable and rather bad-tempered old savage. . . . He looked the part of the Tiger—the man-eating Tiger who had hunted down Ministry after Ministry, and rent them with his powerful claws. He came into the room with short, quick steps. He was then seventy years of age, and his greatest days were to come seven or eight years later."

Turning from these days of rest and pleasure abroad, we must now describe Lloyd George's last achievement as a Liberal statesman—the Land Campaign. Sympathy with the urban workers was for him an acquired thing ; nor did he, perhaps, ever fully possess it. That is one of the reasons, if not the principal one, why he did not feel drawn towards the Labour Party in those frequently recurring moments between 1911 and 1914 when he was profoundly

disappointed with the Liberal Party, and altogether sceptical with regard to its future prospects. With his upbringing, and his transparently genuine sympathy with the poor, it seems at first sight altogether surprising that he should have coquetted with the idea of a coalition with the Conservatives, rather than with organised Labour. The fact is not, however, nearly so strange as it would appear; inasmuch as the Labour Party was almost wholly the instrument of the urban worker and the Trade Unions, and for neither of these did Lloyd George really in his heart of hearts care in the least. He had carried into law great measures which, in the main, were designed to improve the lot of the industrial worker; but it is more than doubtful whether the ideals of the organised labour of town and factory ever exercised much power over his mind. His heart was always with the "cottage-bred" man, the cottage in the country, the man who guided the plough and pruned the fruit trees. More and more as he came to reckon among his friends great captains of industry did he come to feel admiration for the self-made business man, the man who, beginning as an errand boy in a small shop, ends as the owner of a Port Sunlight or a Bournville. But for the great territorial magnate, whose estates had been in his family for generations, he seems never to have felt a particle of liking or sympathy. To say that such was the case with Lloyd George is not to praise his way of looking at things, or to commend his scale of values. On the contrary, this indulgence shown towards the exploiters of industrial labour, and the lack of appreciation of the part played in the national life by the landed gentry, is probably the most important failing to be noted in Lloyd George's pre-War statesmanship. For the evils of squirearchy, in the twentieth century, were insignificant compared with those which followed in the wake of the

successful business man. But at that time Lloyd George seems to have been unable to perceive that the life of rural England, in which then as always he so profoundly believed, must inevitably collapse if the great hereditary estates upon which it depended were to be broken up. We deplore to-day the wholesale conversion of lovely countryside into lots for the exploitation of the jerry-builder's sorry art, and the rapid shrinkage of our domestic food supplies; and fairness must allow that these evils were encouraged in no small measure by Lloyd George's attacks in word and deed upon the great landowners, and by his favouring of the upstart capitalists who sought nothing but a short cut to wealth. All these evil consequences Lloyd George failed to see; and he prepared, in 1913, to lead a new attack upon the landed interest.

To admit that Lloyd George in those pre-War years failed lamentably and disastrously to see the merits of the great landlords is not the same as saying that our land system had no faults, and could not be improved. It had, in fact, many faults. The agricultural labourer was so wretchedly paid that no one who had the chance to become something else would remain on the land. Cottages were often picturesque, but nearly always insanitary and lacking in every amenity. Conditions of land tenure were uncertain and arbitrary, depending upon the whims of capricious, and often unenlightened, owners. The community had scarcely any rights against the absolute ownership vested in the landlord; with the result that when any public enterprise was undertaken, from the erection of a village school to the construction of a highroad, extortionate tribute had to be paid. Farming was unprofitable, and rapidly disappearing, to some extent at least because of insecurity of tenure, because tenants were actually penalised for improvements made at their own expense, and because game

was allowed to damage their crops. All these, and similar evils, undoubtedly required redressing; and there was every justification for the appointment of a committee under the chairmanship of that expert in agricultural affairs—Arthur Acland—to review the position as a whole, and to suggest desirable reforms.

At first it had occurred to Lloyd George to resign his office of Chancellor of the Exchequer when he took up the cause of land reform, and to devote his whole time to a campaign outside the Cabinet. He believed that his colleagues were at best lukewarm, and some of them actively hostile. A popular appeal such as he had in mind would undoubtedly stir up a great deal of bitterness; for the proposals which he intended to lay before the country went a great deal further than the mild land taxes of the 1909 Budget: some very hard hitting would certainly be inevitable, and he doubted whether any of his colleagues would welcome such a renewal of class conflict. On the whole the Cabinet felt that they had already done a fair day's work, and were now entitled to at least a brief period of tranquillity. To start a raging tearing campaign against the landlords was the last thing in the world that they wished for, especially with the growing tension of the Irish situation upon their hands. Asquith he believed would be sympathetic; but of none of his other colleagues did he feel sure. That he himself felt sincerely and deeply on the question of the land, no one can doubt; and the sincerity of the conviction is not diminished by the fact that he believed that only the adoption of some big new social policy would save the Liberal Party from annihilation. "There are times", he remarked to a friend in the course of a conversation in 1912, "when Radicalism needs a great stimulus—when the Radical cause has fallen into the abyss of respectability and conventionality. Something

must be done to put fresh life into the dry bones. I feel that the land and the agricultural labourer are the root of the whole social evil. Men purchase land for collateral purposes. They give it an adventitious value. You must make the rent of agricultural land approximate to its real value." Political advisers who were more concerned with winning votes than with doing the right thing, were not enamoured of Lloyd George's land proposals: they pointed out that the town worker was the real asset of the Liberal Party, and that he was the person to be considered when framing new policies. But Lloyd George rose above such electioneering calculations, as he always has done when pursuing something in which he really does believe with all his heart and soul. His reply was, that the Labour Party were failing just because they were attempting to win elections by buying votes. "The Labour Party", he said, "has never made any real progress. They have never made an appeal to the imagination. You can never run a great political campaign on wages. Your five shillings and two shillings is all very well, but the appeal is too close at hand. It is too sordid. Individually, people are selfish. In the mass they are prepared to look to the future and support measures which will benefit coming generations."

Soon, however, Lloyd George abandoned the idea of resigning office; and after another mild flirtation with the plan of a coalition, he decided that the most practicable scheme was to have an inquiry made into the abuses of the land system, and then endeavour to convert his colleagues to the acceptance of a policy aimed at removing them. There was, indeed, no need for him to distrust his own power; for at that time his ascendancy in the Cabinet seems to have been complete. His persuasive tongue and resourceful mind, coupled with the fact that he was far and away the most valuable electioneering asset which the

Liberal Party possessed, made his colleagues very ready to be led by him. "It is a strange phenomenon," remarks Lord Riddell, writing at the time in his diary, "this poor Welsh lawyer busily engaged in hatching schemes to hurl the mighty from their seats and, what is more, being able to get his schemes adopted by the Cabinet. Joe Chamberlain is obviously his model, but he is more elastic than J. C., and more dexterous in manipulating the Press and public opinion." The Prime Minister gave his assent to the inauguration of a great land campaign, as part of the official Liberal policy. On the whole, Liberals in the House were well content to see the territorial magnates attacked; for they themselves, for the most part, belonged to the wealthy commercial and industrial classes. The Labour Party approved of the attack on landlords, but they were by no means enthusiastic; their own pet belief being that the proper people to attack just then were those same wealthy merchants and manufacturers for whom the Chancellor had far too warm a corner in his heart.

The approval of his colleagues having been obtained, Lloyd George opened his last campaign with a great speech at Bedford, in October, 1913. For weeks beforehand he had been sniffing the air like an old war-horse, and looking forward with an intense joy to renewing the fight with the landlords. And if the landlords happened also to be peers, the greater would be the fun! "I shall give them snuff," he declared, "I shall smash the whole thing. Agricultural landlords have made an awful mess of things. What sort of a business would you have if you allowed your pleasure to come first, and your business second? But that is what they have done and are doing. Sport always comes first." The speech thus adumbrated was carefully prepared, and fully discussed beforehand with some of his more intimate associates, such as Masterman and Rufus Isaacs. His mind



was then full of the new subject—the decay of the village, the iniquities of the sporting landlord, the poverty of the labourer, the squalor of country cottages, the long hours of work and the dreary evenings. In a shop window in Pall Mall he saw a picture which greatly impressed him. It depicted a poacher, his father and little daughter, with the gamekeeper in the distance; and he described to his friends the look of fear on the faces of the child and the old man, and the gloomy determination worn by the countenance of the poacher. He had gone into the shop to inquire the price of the picture; and found that it was £200—far beyond his means. But although he was unable to purchase the picture, its story had burnt itself into his memory, and was given out in fiery eloquence in the course of the campaign which then began. The Bedford speech was, it is needless to say, picturesque and eloquent. Its real importance lay in the fact that it was the first official declaration on the part of a British Government in favour of abolishing the unfettered ownership of land.

Lloyd George's presentation of his case was more conciliatory in tone than it had been four years earlier, when he was defending his Budget proposals by carrying the war into the enemy's territory. There was less abuse of individuals, and a greater desire to win recognition for the need of land reform from men of goodwill of all shades of political opinion. The report of the Land Inquiry Committee, upon which the proposals were to be based, was as careful and competent an investigation as ever took place before or since. Briefly, its proposals were, to set up a Ministry of Land, with large powers, to be exercised by Commissioners acting judicially, over small holdings, land purchase, disputes between landlord and tenant affecting the proper development of the resources of the land, reclamation and afforestation. The Commissioners were to fix minimum

wages for labourers in different districts ; and to regulate their hours of labour ; and were, moreover, to be armed with the power of compulsory purchase at a fair price in order to provide allotments and small holdings. Farmers given notice to quit were to be allowed to appeal to the Commissioners, who could award them compensation for disturbance of goodwill, if they were of the opinion that the eviction had been capricious or unfair. The small farmer was to have the right of having his rent revised by the Commissioners ; and the large farmer of appealing to them against the raising of his rent, or even in case of severe economic depression, in favour of having it lowered. A complete survey was to be made of all the land of the country, and special provision made for rural housing. These proposals were laid before the Cabinet, and in substance accepted as the Government policy. It was assumed that Lloyd George would be a willing missionary on their behalf, and that the greater part of the year 1914 in Parliament would be devoted to them.

What the fate of the Land Policy would have been had the Great War not driven it off the political stage no man can tell. In themselves the proposals were excellent ; nevertheless they certainly lacked popular appeal. Industrial workers regarded them coldly, for the town dweller has never quite succeeded in bringing himself to regard his agricultural brother as a real comrade. Nor were middle-class Liberals enthusiastic. As for the Conservatives, they attacked the proposals with something of the ferocity with which they had assailed the Budget. Again Lloyd George became the target at which the most indiscriminate abuse was directed. The proposals were painted by their opponents as a definite step on the downward slope towards land nationalisation. Most of all were the Chancellor's denunciations of Game Laws and sport

resented. Metaphorically, and sometimes even literally, pheasants and mangel-wurzels hurtled through the air when he was speaking.

A typical example of the modes and ways of these times may be found in a visit which Lloyd George paid to Oxford, in November, 1913, as guest at the Strangers' Debate of the Union. Outside the building a great crowd had assembled, and when Lloyd George arrived, cheers and catcalls rent the air, and a large pheasant was thrown, which hit him on the head. The debating hall of the Union was filled to overflowing. Gilbert Talbot, son of the Bishop of Winchester, a brilliant young politician whose life in the early twenties was to be lost two years later on the Western Front, was the President. At question time, a hostile member rose to ask: "Will Mr. Lloyd George tell us whether he still has any Marconi shares to sell?" That outraged the audience's sense of hospitality and fair play, and vociferous applause followed the President's stern rebuke to the ill-mannered questioner: "I know I am expressing the feelings of the House when I say that we shall not tolerate any insult to a gentleman who on this occasion is the guest of the Society." The motion down for debate was: "That this House does not approve of the Land Policy of His Majesty's Government." Lloyd George spoke fourth and last. It was a reasoned and conciliatory utterance, with a few gleams of wit, but not a shred of abuse, and practically no rhetorical display. The peroration took the form of an appeal to the hundreds of young university men who thronged the historic debating hall to forget the ties of Party, and to devote themselves anew to the "condition of England problem". If the message went forth, he cried, that the young men of Oxford were determined to let no privilege stand in the way of justice, and to strive to obtain better living conditions for all their fellow-subjects,

it would "fill England with new hope for the future". This speech was, beyond doubt, one of his greatest debating triumphs, as was shown by the fact that a substantial majority registered their votes in favour of the Land Policy, and that in an Oxford which was still nine-tenths Tory. Nor has it ever been the custom at union debates for votes to be given as a compliment to a visitor, however distinguished, unless he has succeeded in convincing the House of the justice of his cause. But the speech was something better than a debating triumph: it was an appeal which sank deep into the minds of the more earnest and politically-minded undergraduates present; and its effects lingered. The majority of the young men who heard it, and were moved by it, as by the preaching of a crusader, died prematurely in the War: had they lived, Lloyd George might have seen the realisation of his dream of a Centre Party composed of the flower of the Conservative and Liberal youth of England.

When an account of Lloyd George's political activities has been given, not much remains unsaid. For he was a politician first, last, and all the time; and if a sponge were to be drawn across the political side of his life, nothing would be left to evoke the curiosity of the public. In this respect he differs from the vast majority of British statesmen of the past fifty years. Gladstone, leaving his politics on one side, had ample material wherewith to furnish at least half a dozen professors, as well as an archbishop. Rosebery wrote first-rate books, and was a big figure on the turf. Morley was one of our leading men of letters before he ever entered the House of Commons. Bryce will be remembered by his brilliant contributions to history and jurisprudence rather than by anything he accomplished in the political field, except perhaps his epoch-making mission as Ambassador to the United States.

Balfour and Haldane could have filled university chairs in philosophy. Winston Churchill, if he had chosen to concentrate upon the writing of history, might be the rival of Lord Macaulay. Asquith, Birrell, Carson, F. E. Smith, Rufus Isaacs, and John Simon, were all leaders of the Bar, to whom the highest judicial offices were open. Other Cabinet Ministers, though not qualified for distinction in professional pursuits, were either eminent business men, or else great landowners. But Lloyd George, from the time early in the century when he ceased to practice as a solicitor, lived for politics and for that alone. A friend who used, when he was at the Exchequer, to play golf with him regularly once or twice a week, has left on record that he always preferred to take part in a foursome, since that afforded more opportunity for conversation; and the talk was always about the political measures and personalities of the moment.

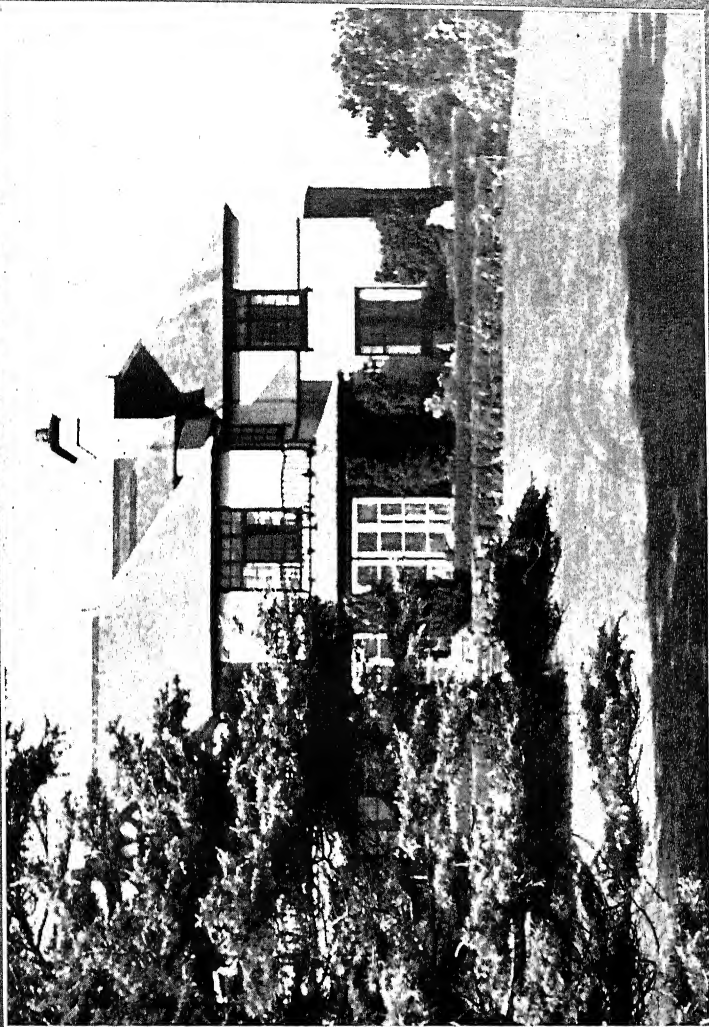
In one sense it may be said that Lloyd George lived a double life during those years, 1908-1914—his life in, or near, London, and his life at Criccieth. Each life had its own set of friends, and its own habits. The difference between them reached very far: it may be described, perhaps, without exaggeration as a conflict between higher, and more idealist, forces against lower, and more materialistic, ones, struggling for possession of the statesman's soul. At the beginning of the period his visits to Criccieth were frequent and prolonged. Save for three or four weeks abroad every year, he would spend the whole of the time when Parliament was not sitting, at the old home. There he would see Richard Lloyd every day, and be surrounded by the comrades and influences of early life. He would (as he himself might have put it in one of his perorations) lift up his eyes to the hills; and in the contemplation of the big steadfast things which count in a nation's life, forget the

distractions, the sordid calculations and machinations, which the life of Party strife tended to bring into far too great a prominence. But as time went on, he not unnaturally came to see more and more of his London friends, until the day arrived when he could not be happy without surrounding himself with them, even at Criccieth. And finally, he began to find Criccieth boring even in the company of these friends, and built for himself a house, first at Walton Heath, and later at Churt. It is, the story, it would seem, of a steady decline in moral fibre, of the undermining of the foundations of a fine political faith, by the almost imperceptible erosion due to the flood of alien influences which obliterated the landmarks of his early and splendid idealism. A less sensitive, and more self-contained, man might succeed in living his own life anywhere. But Lloyd George responds too much to his environment for such a thing to be possible for him. Even in the darkest days of his political degradation, in 1920, he could still recover some gleams of finer feeling when standing on an Eisteddfod platform, surrounded by men of deeper vision.

But throughout the time that he was Chancellor of the Exchequer, the life at Criccieth, and the life in London and Walton Heath, went on side by side; and to form a fairly faithful picture of Lloyd George as he then was in his hours of relaxation it is necessary to describe both. Geography, unfortunately, made it impossible to pass very frequently from the one home to the other. Gladstone used to spend the months during which Parliament was sitting, in London, and the rest of the year at Hawarden. Sessions were shorter in those less crowded times; nor had the discovery been made that it is impossible for a statesman to exist without a country house to which to retire for every week-end. These things, however, had changed by 1908. Parliament sat for longer periods; though its duties were still light

compared with what they have been at various times since the War. Above all, the week-end habit had grown until this weekly holiday had come to be regarded as a necessity. Lloyd George followed the fashion; and he soon discovered that since Criccieth was too far to make a journey thither every week feasible, he must have another home in the vicinity of the metropolis. For a time this English home remained merely a week-end abode; and for all longer periods he continued invariably to go to Criccieth. By degrees, however, the old was supplanted by the new, and the centre of gravity of his life shifted from Criccieth to Surrey.

Brynawel, the semi-detached villa at Criccieth which Lloyd George had inhabited for the first few years of his married life, was abandoned in 1908, and Brynawelon was built. The new house had an incomparable position. It stood on a hill behind Criccieth, commanding a magnificent and uninterrupted view of sea and mountain in every direction. In front lay Cardigan Bay, with the rugged Merionethshire mountains, towered over by Cader Idris, forming a perfect frame for its waters. From the back windows a lovely view of Snowdon, Moel Hebog, and Moelwyn was to be obtained on days of average clearness. About the house stretched green fields and copses, dotted here and there by picturesque labourers' cottages. Brynawelon as originally built was unpretentious—a square, two-storied, black-and-white structure, containing two good living-rooms, and half a dozen bedrooms. A small lawn stretched below the veranda, and a good kitchen garden lay behind. At the entrance to the short path leading from the public road to the front door stood two fine iron gates; but these had soon to make way for a solid wooden door, flanked by a tall hedge, to keep out the prying glances of the hundreds of visitors who used to throng there



BRYNAWELON



in order to watch the Chancellor sitting reading or chatting on the veranda. The excluded public took their revenge by carving their initials on every square inch of the new door! Brynawelon was well planned and comfortable, but in no wise different from the houses which successful village grocers and drapers build for themselves when they retire. Later it was found to be too small. Guests began to come to Criccieth more frequently; and secretaries were always there when the Chancellor was in residence. Mrs. Lloyd George complained that her only drawing-room was turned into an office; and that the whole family and guests had to make the most of the dining-room, which was the only other room in the house. Consequently a third living-room was added, and a couple of new bedrooms. An adjoining field was also purchased; for Dame Margaret, like her husband, is an expert and enthusiastic gardener; and the garden at Brynawelon is her own special hobby.

Lloyd George took a very natural and proper pride in Brynawelon, and spent as much of his time there as he possibly could. Nor was it unnatural that he should wish to bring there some of the most intimate of his London friends. He loved to show them the beauties of that lovely district, and to introduce them to his Welsh neighbours. It must not for a moment be supposed that Lloyd George, as he became more famous and more prosperous, made any radical alteration in his mode of living. Simplicity was the keynote of Brynawelon, as it was of the more humble house which preceded it, and of the more imposing home at Churt in later years. No man servant has ever been employed in any of Lloyd George's houses. The meals were such as lower middle-class families were accustomed to; and for many years no wine or intoxicants ever appeared on the table. Winston Churchill, Rufus Isaacs, Masterman, the Master of Elibank, and George Riddell were his most

frequent guests; and they would be seen sitting at his table on terms of perfect equality with a local Nonconformist Minister, a draper, an ironmonger, with Richard Lloyd the ex-shoemaker of course in the place of honour.

Life for Lloyd George at Criccieth was always a mixture of work and recreation. He was never a good holiday-maker. One day of complete idleness he could thoroughly enjoy: a second day would be tolerated: but on the third day he must be up and doing. The telephone to London would be busy, secretaries would be hard at work, experts would be suddenly sent for, and mountains of official papers would be dealt with. Then, too, the constituency had certain claims which could not be wholly ignored. There would be an occasional public meeting to address, a bazaar or a golf course to open, an Eisteddfod to preside over, and a host of faithful friends in all the boroughs to be called on. A sort of daily routine came in time to be worked out. The Chancellor was an early riser, and by eleven o'clock would have done a good three hours' work. He would then drive to the links, and play a round of golf, returning for lunch at one-thirty. After lunch would always follow a siesta, generally in the open air; after which would come reading or conversation. After tea more exercise would be taken, in the form of a vigorous walk to Llanystumdwy, or along the cliffs to the Dwyfor. Finally, after a simple supper, more work with secretaries and experts, with bed not later than ten o'clock. Occasionally this usual routine would be varied by a motor drive in the magnificent surrounding country; for the glorious passes of Snowdonia, and the lovely and unspoilt little bays of the Llyn Peninsula, are all within twenty miles of Brynawelon. From the start Lloyd George has been an enthusiastic motorist, and he was one of the first persons at Criccieth to own a car. He has never, however, learnt to take the wheel himself.



*Lafayette, Ltd.*

DAME MARGARET LLOYD GEORGE.

"The Tories", he jocularly declared one day, when endeavouring to persuade his robust old uncle to put on an overcoat when starting for a drive in March in an open car, "say that I know nothing about finance; but even they must admit that I know something about motoring."

Lloyd George was certainly seen at his best among his own people at Criccieth and Llanystumdwy. He knew them all by name, and felt a real affection for them; while they, on their side, cherished for him the kind of admiring pride and devotion which an eighteenth-century Scottish clan felt towards their chief. No person who happened to meet the Chancellor on one of his daily rambles in the neighbourhood would fail to be recognised; and recognition would always be followed by a friendly word of greeting.

During all the years that he was at the Exchequer, Lloyd George was a most enthusiastic golfer. In London he played at Walton Heath, where it was always dangerously easy to mix politics with golf. The superbly situated links at Criccieth attracted him almost every morning when staying at his Welsh home. There his partner would be his brother, or one of his sons, or, still more often, one of the villagers known to him from boyhood upward. Occasionally a political friend from London—Winston Churchill, Masterman, Rufus Isaacs, the Master of Elibank, or Sir George Riddell—would be staying at Brynawelon; and it was quite an ordinary spectacle to see the Chancellor, with the village draper as his partner, playing against the village cobbler and Winston Churchill. Many newspaper photographs exist as evidence of these happy classless golfing days. The great ones of the political world must have been interested in the discovery that small Welsh towns knew the meaning of social democracy in practice, however ignorant they may have been of its theoretical foundations; that here were classless communities in which a man might

be richer or more learned than his neighbour, but in which nothing that he chanced to possess conferred any social superiority. The station-master at Criccieth used to relate with delighted satisfaction how he one day beheld an elderly Calvinistic Methodist Minister, whose salary was certainly under £200 a year, making for the train, his heavy portmanteau being cheerfully carried by Winston Churchill!

The inhabitants at Criccieth were naturally pleased to have the opportunity of seeing so many famous politicians at close range, and with a complete absence of formality. On one or two occasions, Mr. Churchill, when First Lord of the Admiralty, arrived in the Admiralty yacht *Enchantress*. The vessel was anchored for several days just off the castle rock, and was, it is needless to say, regarded as a huge attraction by the thousands of visitors who, as it was August, filled Criccieth and the neighbouring resorts on Cardigan Bay.

On Sundays the Chancellor never failed to attend at least one, and very often two, services at the Baptist Chapel, of which, until his death in 1917, Richard Lloyd was one of the two pastors. No father ever loved his son more intensely than Richard Lloyd loved his nephew; and the Chancellor returned that love in equal measure. No matter where Lloyd George might be, nor how busy—in London or abroad, during the fateful days of the Budget Election, and even in the first year of his Premiership, when the Great War must have been taxing his time and energy to the limits of endurance—he never failed to write a letter every day, with his own hand, to Richard Lloyd. On the part of the older man there was also a very natural pride in the achievements of the poor lad to whom he had been so truly a father. It was not, however, an uncritical admiration; and Lloyd George would be the first to admit that on many occasions he had been pulled back to the right track

by his uncle's admonitions. Richard Lloyd was a conscience keeper that any man might be glad to possess : no sophistry could impose upon that clear and penetrating intellect ; and no excuse of profit or convenience could obscure for him the eternal distinction between right and wrong, in politics as in everything else. In the days of persecution, during the South African War, Richard Lloyd had never hesitated to urge his nephew to risk his career, and if need be even his life, in advocating the cause of the Boers. Nor did it worry him in the least that some of his Criccieth neighbours should make a straw image of himself, and burn it to an appropriate accompaniment of insults, on the village green. He watched with enthusiasm Lloyd George's fight for the cause of the poor in the days of his tenure of the Chancellorship ; and the daily letters which reached Downing Street from Criccieth were filled with encouragement and praise. The old man himself was a frequent visitor to Downing Street. There he would meet, at his nephew's table, many of the most famous people in the land : but to his simple, unaffected, and completely dignified nature, it would never occur that there was anything incongruous in a Prime Minister and a duke sitting on terms of equality at a dinner table with a retired village shoemaker. Nor indeed was there ; for not only did Richard Lloyd possess an intellect of the first order, a mind stocked with knowledge gleaned from a lifetime of serious reading, but he had also a natural refinement, and a grand courtesy which would have done credit to a courtier. A member of the landed gentry of Caernarvonshire, who knew him well, and knowing him, liked him, while execrating his politics, used often to declare with emphasis : " Richard Lloyd is a great gentleman."

Among the friends of Lloyd George who were captivated by Richard Lloyd's fine qualities was Rufus Isaacs, at that time Attorney-General. The two men conceived a warm

friendship for each other. Many years afterwards, among Richard Lloyd's private papers, the following letter was discovered, written to him by Isaacs on December 16th, 1911 :

" DEAR MR. LLOYD,

" I have just heard the Royal Assent given to the Insurance Bill—now an Act—and felt that I must write and congratulate you on this splendid achievement of the Chancellor. In spite of all obstacles—natural and artificial—(the last by no means the least) his courage and determination have triumphed. In the years to come he will be more proud of this than any measure he has passed or may pass—it is a noble conception of his which he alone has converted into practical shape. His genius for conciliation combined with tenacity of purpose have carried a Bill which would have daunted and crushed any other man, and as I sat thinking it over I was impelled to write to you, who, as I know from him, have so much responsibility for the man—David Lloyd George—as he is. You will, I am sure, not misunderstand this impulse.

" Yours faithfully,

- " RUFUS D. ISAACS."

There are many, and among them some who knew uncle and nephew intimately, who maintain that had Richard Lloyd not died in 1917, but lived on for another half-dozen years, Lloyd George would have been saved from the disastrous errors which ruined his Premiership, and cast him out, at the age of fifty-nine, into the wilderness of retirement for the remainder of his life. In my opinion the break with the old steadfast loyalties, the habitual choosing of unworthy friends and colleagues, and the capricious



*W. Williams,  
Caernarvon.*

MR. LLOYD GEORGE, SIR RUFUS ISAACS, AND MR. MASTERMAN  
ON THE CRICCIETH LINKS, IN 1912.



opportunism, without settled policy or guiding principles, of the years 1918 to 1922, might have been avoided, had there been at Criccieth an onlooker so clear-sighted and so noble as Richard Lloyd; and one, moreover, who could speak to the all-powerful Prime Minister with an authority which he would not willingly have disregarded.

But it was not merely force of habit and respect for his uncle that prompted Lloyd George to attend the Baptist Chapel regularly when at Criccieth: he had then, as he has always had, a genuine delight in Welsh preaching and hymn-singing. No Preaching Festival could be held within thirty miles of Criccieth without Lloyd George motoring to it to indulge this taste. The love of fine preaching, which Lloyd George shares with the majority of his fellow-countrymen, has no necessary connection with religion: it is simply a love of first-rate oratory; and there probably never have been in this world finer orators than the best of Welsh preachers. Lloyd George not only knew personally all the more noted pulpit giants of his own day, but he had an intimate acquaintance with the lives, and the printed sermons, of those of past times. He knew the characteristic style of each one; he could mimic the voice and gestures, and relate for hours on end purple passages from their most famous sermons. It was on the style of speaking of the Welsh preachers that he had modelled his own oratory, with such adjustments to the requirements of an English audience, and of political themes, as were inevitable. When he was Chancellor of the Exchequer, there were two Welsh preachers who stood head and shoulders above all others—John Williams, of Brynsiencyn, and Thomas Charles Williams, both of them Calvinistic Methodists. They became intimate friends, and were frequent guests both at Brynawelon and at Downing Street. There could be no greater contrast than that between the preaching style of

these two men ; but Lloyd George had unbounded admiration for both. Of the two, he perhaps admired John Williams the more ; and he has been known to declare that the three finest speaking voices that he has heard were those of Gladstone, Briand, and this great Welsh orator.

Nor was Lloyd George's love for the great hymns, and great hymn tunes, of Wales, any less ardent than his love of Welsh preaching. On an earlier page we have described how he himself used to act as leader of the singing at Crickieth Baptist Chapel ; for he possessed a melodious tenor voice. And all through life he has loved, whenever his family have been present, or any other Welsh people capable of joining in the old sacred melodies, to spend Sunday evening sitting on the hearth singing his favourite hymns. When Sir Walford Davies came to the Welsh University as Musical Director in 1919, he found a willing helper in Lloyd George. Such was his keenness in Welsh congregational singing, that in March, 1922, when he was at Crickieth, and supposed to be partly resting and partly preparing for the Genoa Conference, he invited Sir Walford Davies, Sir Henry Hadow, and Sir Richard Terry to be his guests at Brynawelon for several days, while they were engaged upon the task of selecting tunes for a new hymn book ; and they soon discovered that his interest in the fate of one of his favourite hymn tunes was at least as great as in the fate of Upper Silesia or the Polish Corridor !

Of the genuineness of Lloyd George's love for Wales there can be no doubt in the minds of those who know him well. Its language has always been the language of his hearth. All his five children spoke Welsh fluently before they knew a word of English. He has always been a great reader of Welsh prose and verse ; and his retentive memory is well stocked with all that is best in both. At one time he used not unfrequently to lecture to literary societies on

some of his favourite Welsh authors. The study of Welsh literature has in recent years made great progress ; and to-day no competent person would dream of assigning to the best Welsh poetry and prose a place below that of any save that of the few immortals that the whole world has agreed to honour. But fifty years ago this fact was by no means clearly recognised even in Wales. Generations of English education, with teachers making it their business to impress upon Welsh children that their language was a mere *patois*, and that they must learn to read English books, seeing that there were none worth reading in their native tongue, had inevitably induced a feeling of inferiority. This evil legacy of intellectual serfdom was only beginning to be destroyed when Lloyd George was a young man ; and he himself did as much as any one of his generation to hasten its destruction, and to replace it by a proper respect for, and appreciation of, the treasures of Welsh literature.

For the country of Wales—its mountains, its wooded valleys, and its sea coasts—Lloyd George has also always had an intense love and pride. It was his good fortune to be brought up in one of the most beautiful districts in Wales, if not in the whole world. Sea and mountain, woodland and meadow, river and lake—all are to be seen there in highest perfection. There were few things that he enjoyed better in his first years as Minister of the Crown than to bring his English friends down to Criccieth, and to show them the splendour of the Caernarvonshire countryside. He was always a mighty walker, covering the ground at a pace which for some of his companions meant almost a run. Visitors to Criccieth have often caught sight of an interesting and amusing spectacle—Lloyd George striding ahead, the long hair and the green cloak streaming in the breeze ; and at his heels, often far behind, a procession of

Cabinet Ministers, eminent Civil Servants, learned professors, and men of letters, doing their utmost not to fall so far in the rear as to miss the interesting and stimulating conversation which incessantly flowed from their leader's lips. These walks must have been about as trying to some of the more sedentary guests as those obstacle races in which Theodore Roosevelt used to delight, and which he maliciously used to invite sedate members of the diplomatic corps to join. The Welsh countryside is steeped in literary and historical associations; and as Lloyd George and his guests walked or drove in Caernarvonshire and Merionethshire, he would pour out for their benefit from his own inexhaustible store of knowledge of the traditions, the folklore and the authentic history of the places they passed. One of Lloyd George's conspicuous gifts is the ability to recreate for his auditor vividly, and in a few words, scenes from the past. To be able to do so requires a detailed knowledge of the events described; and that his wonderful memory, combined with his wide reading, and his intense interest in all things human, has enabled him to acquire. Many years later than the time with which we are now dealing, that accomplished scholar, Sir Martin Conway, travelled in his company from Calais to Naples; and in his autobiography he tells how, throughout the whole length of that historic route, Lloyd George was able to present a vivid verbal panorama of the history of each spot from Roman times down. And as Conway remarks, the kind of running commentary which he kept up could only come from a man with a vast and detailed knowledge of the byways, as well as the highways, of European history, classical, mediæval, and modern. Such testimony, coming from so competent a judge, is evidence enough (if evidence were indeed required) to rebut the ridiculous charge that Lloyd George is, or ever was, an

ignorant man, never reading, and talking glibly out of an empty mind.

Apart from miscellaneous engagements, which tended to grow fewer in number as the years went by, there was an annual meeting between Lloyd George and his fellow-countrymen which never failed; and that was the National Eisteddfod. For the inside of one week in August, the whole of musical and literary Wales (and that means shopkeepers, manual labourers, farm labourers, and professional men, since in Wales almost everybody is seriously interested in either literature or music) assembles at the chosen spot for the great cultural festival. The Eisteddfod is held in alternate years in North and South Wales, and the place is decided upon two years in advance by vote. At each of the meetings of the Eisteddfod some famous person is invited to preside; and from 1890 onward, Lloyd George has invariably been chairman at the Thursday afternoon session. That is the occasion on which the ceremony of the chairing of the victorious bard takes place. There was one year in which Lloyd George was too ill to attend; but except for that, forty-eight National Eisteddfodau have listened to his presidential addresses. A tremendous ovation always awaited him on these annual appearances; and some of the finest of his Welsh speeches have been delivered on those occasions. Year by year enthusiasm for him increased, until it reached its climax in the year before the Great War. The millions of Welsh and English people who have listened to the broadcasts of Lloyd George's Eisteddfod speeches in recent years, when the reception accorded him has been comparatively tepid, can have no conception of the tempest of applause with which he used to be greeted in the old days.

Lloyd George's life in Wales meant a time of comparative leisure, of freedom at least from the duty of attendance in

Parliament and Cabinet. No real comparison is possible between it and his life in England; for that meant the few hours of relaxation which an exceedingly busy Cabinet Minister was able to snatch every week for recreation and social engagements. There can have been few harder workers among Ministers than Lloyd George. Indeed, he seemed to live for his work and that alone, using even meals and golf as opportunities for political discussion. As soon as he entered the Cabinet he began the custom of inviting people with whom he desired to have informal political talks to breakfast. Lloyd George is one of the fortunate folk who are always at their best in the early morning. Town life he has always loathed; and as soon as his financial means made such a thing possible, he acquired a country house within easy reach of London. From Gray's Inn, where he began his life in the metropolis, he had moved to Wandsworth Common; and there, while President of the Board of Trade, he dwelt in a small villa, whose rent was £65 per annum, with no distinction of any kind in furniture or decoration.

But when he became a golfing enthusiast, Lloyd George began to feel the attraction of Walton Heath. Nor was it simply the fame of the links which drew him thither: there was a colony of politicians and journalists assembled there which rendered it a most desirable place of residence for a statesman who never wanted to be a recluse, and who never objected to being reminded of the existence of the political world. Asquith might retire to a secluded nook on the banks of the Thames; and Grey might bury himself in an inaccessible spot in Hampshire; but not for Lloyd George were such abodes: he preferred to be in contact with the busy world; and in particular to have daily chats, mixed with exercise, with colleagues and opponents of Parliament and Press. The little colony at Walton Heath included

George Riddell, and such leading Liberals as Winston Churchill, McKenna, Percy Illingworth, Rufus Isaacs, the Master of Elibank, Masterman, and Robert Donald. In addition Bonar Law, and many other Conservative politicians and journalists, used to play regularly on the links.

It was by his intimate friend, George Riddell, that Lloyd George was introduced to Walton. In assessing the influence of various people upon his life, Riddell must be assigned a place very near the top. From about 1908 until 1920 the two men were almost inseparable. Riddell, as all the world knows, was a kindly man, and a wonderful business man. Nevertheless, candour impels the student of Lloyd George's career to admit that his influence was almost wholly evil. If we were to seek the history of the inner process which culminated in the destruction of Lloyd George's position, and the blighting of a career which might have proceeded to at least another fifteen years of fruitful political activity, we should find all the necessary data in the three volumes of diary which Riddell has given us. There, in the pages of the *Diary* is Lloyd George "off duty", pictured with almost the minuteness of detail with which Boswell depicted Johnson. But whereas Boswell established Johnson for ever in the hearts of Englishmen as a type of the finest character that our country can produce, Riddell simply succeeded in dragging Lloyd George through the mire, and exhibiting him with a foulness which makes the reader shudder. That the rich and influential newspaper magnate was of immense superficial use to Lloyd George in his career is obvious: when he complained that his watch was a poor timekeeper Riddell presented him with a new gold one; when he expressed a wish to live at Walton, the complacent Riddell built him a house there. Wealth and publicity were within this man's power to confer upon his friends; but what he seems not to have been able to

give was any conception of politics other than a process of scheming and jobbing—the proverbial “dirty game” sneered at by enemies of democracy. Vote-catching, and dishing the other side, seem to have been the only things ever thought of by him in connection with politics. One can search the three most entertaining volumes of the *Diary* without lighting upon one single wise maxim, one single noble thought, one single appeal to moral right. Riddell had made a huge success of his own newspaper business; nor, apparently, had right and wrong played any conspicuous part in that either, if we may judge by the fact that he was the first man to sell Sunday newspapers in Scotland, and that the paper he chose to sell was the *News of the World*! These may have been the ways of an American “boss”, but they were alien to all the best traditions of British statesmanship; and no politician could adopt them without cutting the ground from beneath his own feet.

Unfortunately, there existed in Lloyd George always a predisposition to plot and manœuvre, and an absence of thought-out principles, which made him a ready victim to such deleterious influences as those of Riddell. Yet for this unworthy man Lloyd George would seem to have felt the nearest thing to friendship of which he was capable. It must be allowed that when the Fairy Godmother, standing by his lowly cradle in the Manchester cottage, conferred such an assemblage of precious gifts upon him, she completely denied him the capacity of making real friends. Not that he has ever been in the least misanthropic; on the contrary, he has always loved to surround himself with congenial companions, and has abhorred being alone for as much as a day. Nevertheless, a real friend he has probably never possessed. He has liked to have amusing, interesting, and stimulating companions; nor has he ever



avoided the company of men able, at the moment, to be of service to him. But one after another they have been discarded; and there has never been an inner group, friends in fair weather and foul alike, sharers of the innermost secrets of his heart. Riddell seems to have come very near to being a real friend in the four years of the Great War, and the four previous years. But even he, when he began to be critical of the Government's policy in 1921, was given the cold shoulder. Robert Donald, the brilliant editor of the *Daily Chronicle* in its palmiest days, and one of his neighbours at Walton, felt certain that Lloyd George regarded him as a real friend. But in his case likewise, a crucial test in the year 1918 proved that the friendship had been towards the useful journalist, not towards the man himself. Masterman appeared to get as close as anybody to him at one point; yet here again events showed that Lloyd George's affection for him could not (until just before Masterman's death) bridge the gulf created by differences in policy. How different is all this from the real friendships of the political world—Chamberlain and Morley, Grey and Haldane, R. E. Smith and Winston Churchill, and a crowd of others that one might cite—friendships utterly unaffected by political vicissitude, without a trace of self-interest, established in early life and growing ever closer and warmer to the journey's end. Nothing in Lloyd George's career has been more tragic or more pitiful than this loneliness. Perhaps among all his political friends the men he liked best were Winston Churchill and Rufus Isaacs. With them there occurred no break. Churchill was, of course, a man after Lloyd George's own heart—a brilliant speaker, a man who despite his literary sidelines seemed to be completely absorbed in politics (Lloyd George used amusingly to record that even in the vestry on the occasion of his wedding, Churchill

drew him aside and began to discuss politics !), a magnificent fighter, and a gay and affectionate companion. Success has always attracted Lloyd George, and for many years Churchill marched from triumph to triumph. At first the two were close political allies as well as friends ; but after Churchill's removal to the Admiralty in 1911 there was less co-operation between them. It is only fair to add that the private friendship went on undiminished. No statesman of this generation was more universally beloved than Rufus Isaacs. He assuredly possessed a genius for friendship ; and when the break came between Asquith and Lloyd George, sundering so many former companions into two hostile groups, Isaacs never forfeited the warmest regard of Mrs. Asquith on the one hand, while at the same time living on terms of intimacy with Lloyd George.

Like so many of the intensely ambitious and able men who have written their names large on the scroll of history, Lloyd George has always been very egotistic. Even friends have to be judged by their willingness and capacity to help the hero to win further triumphs. " But is he a patriot for *me* ? " was the querulous reply of the Linperor Francis Joseph to a courtier who was assuring him of the patriotism of one of his subjects. Love of Austria counted for nothing in comparison with devotion towards the occupant of the throne. " Is he loyal to *me* ? " has always, one imagines, been Lloyd George's unspoken query. He has often been accused of ingratitude ; and to this extent at least the charge is true : services performed yesterday count with him for nothing compared with services to be rendered to-morrow.

Once he had become possessed of a home at Walton Heath, Lloyd George spent there every spare moment which was not given to Criccieth. It was a larger house than the

Wandsworth one; but life within it retained all the characteristics of extreme simplicity. The two-course dinner remained unchanged, for Lloyd George has always been a plain liver. "A cut of mutton, and a few bright companions is all I ask for," he has been heard to say, when commenting upon his dislike of dinner-parties, and the love which some of his Cabinet colleagues appeared to have of them. Nor would he ever join fashionable parties for week-ends at country houses—resembling in that respect Mr. Bonar Law, and differing markedly from Balfour and Asquith. He has always preferred to entertain than to be entertained; and as time went on, people found it increasingly difficult to persuade him to come to their houses. But he himself kept open house; and if his friends chose to put up with plain mutton and teetotal drinks they were always welcome. In this matter Mrs. Lloyd George was in perfect agreement with her husband; she, too, disliking elaborate living, and hating nothing more than the artificial pastimes of the fashionable world.

Nevertheless, despite the plainness of the fare, and the simplicity of the appurtenances, the Chancellor's fame and the brilliance of his conversation made the greatest in the land only too eager to seek his company. He was almost always gay; and his stream of witty sayings and amusing anecdotes, as well as his more serious comments upon past and present characters and events, ensured that an hour spent at his hospitable table, though that hour might be 9 a.m., would be neither irksome nor profitless. Very often there would be friends from Wales, or friends of his children, staying at Walton or Downing Street; and on those occasions there would generally be music, most often the singing of Welsh hymns and folk-songs. Here is a pen-picture of one of these gatherings, taken from Riddell's

*Diary*: "Welsh hymns by all the Welsh present. L. G. himself sang fervently and vigorously. Sitting on the arm of my chair and translating the words for my benefit, he gave vivid descriptions of the hymns and the lives of their authors and composers. For example: 'He (the author) is describing how the pilgrim has reached Mount Sion and how he is looking back over the twists and turnings through which he has reached his goal and wondering how he ever got there.' Then again: 'The struggling Christian is nearly overcome by the waters of Jordan and the dangers and difficulties of the journey, but sees his friends on Mount Sion, which gives him fresh courage. He says: 'If they have reached there, why should not I?' I said laughingly: 'Well, if we see you there, we shall certainly know there is a good chance of our pulling through.' Whereupon Masterman said: 'If we see Riddell there, we shall think that Jordan is a fraud.' 'In fact,' remarked the Reverend Mr. Williams, 'that there is no Jordan.' "

Another time Mrs. Lloyd George is urging Riddell to have some of the apple pasty (a Welsh speciality) which she declares her husband has had for tea every Sunday for twenty-five years. Then Lloyd George keeps the company entertained by relating amusing tales from the novels of Anatole France. From that comes a swift transition to the subject of Welsh preachers and preaching. Lloyd George fetches a volume of sermons from his library, and translates, to the accompaniment of appropriate gesture, some of his favourite passages. "My speaking", declared the Chancellor, "is founded on the oratory of the Welsh pulpit. The imagery I use is comparatively common amongst Welsh preachers. There is a peculiarity about Welsh oratory. I don't believe it exists in any other language. The speaker and the audience lose themselves

in a sort of ecstasy." In one of his rare moods of despondency, when the Liberal Party seemed to him to be hopelessly doomed, Lloyd George talks about retiring, and devoting himself to literature and golf; to which Riddell humorously replies that it would be easy to raise in the City a handsome subscription for the purpose of enabling the Chancellor to leave politics for good and all! One day Riddell asks those present to tell him what was the most impressive sight they had ever seen. Lloyd George replies that it was the marching of the multitudes past Gladstone's body when it was lying in state. Churchill characteristically made choice of the advance of the Dervishes at the Battle of Omdurman.

Occasionally one catches the sound of a deeper note in these somewhat vapid after-dinner conversations. Lloyd George tells of the Fate which he believes to be guarding him until he has performed some great service for humanity. There can be no doubt that he sincerely believed in this mysterious protection, and that the belief led him to despise all dangers, and inspired him with confidence. When asked what was to happen to him after he had performed the crowning service, he replied: "Ah, afterwards! Well, afterwards, I suppose I shall share the fate of all other men who have been selected to perform great works. I shall be left to my fate. I shall be deserted." Colleagues were sometimes the topic of discussion; and one is struck by the eulogistic way in which Lloyd George invariably speaks of Asquith and Grey. His references to Asquith in particular are always couched in terms of warmest praise. And concerning Grey he declares that he is the only man except Asquith under whom he would be content to serve. Of himself he often spoke quite freely and objectively. But whilst willing to admit that a particular speech was not a success, he never could be brought to allow even the

possibility of some of his policies being mistakes. He was always certain that he was right; and if things went wrong, it was because somebody else had blundered.

The eve of the Great War found Lloyd George probably the most discussed figure in British politics. That is not to say that he enjoyed so established a reputation with the public as Asquith, Balfour, or even Grey. Despite his solid achievements in constructive statesmanship, there still lingered a little of the old feeling that so much eloquence, and so much brilliance, must somehow be allied to shallowness and irresponsibility. Even orthodox Liberals of an advanced political complexion, when discussing in private who should succeed Asquith in the Premiership, seemed to be doubtful whether Lloyd George was a big enough man for the post; and there were many who were outspoken in their opinion that Grey would make a better head of a Government. Mussolini, Mustapha Kemal, and Hitler had not yet taught the world that the man of magic speech can also be a first-rate man of action. In England it required the test of the great crisis of 1916 to demonstrate the fact that, when it came to deeds, Lloyd George was as supreme as he had for twenty years been acknowledged to be in oratory.

Lloyd George's position in his own Party, in the first half of 1914, was a none too happy one. The Land Campaign was not turning out much of a success from an electioneering point of view. So far the Budget land taxes had not yielded a very plentiful crop of the promised "rare and refreshing fruit". The Insurance Act was still unpopular. Liberalism seemed to have spent its force, and to be impotent in the face of the resistance of Ulster to Home Rule, and of the workers who were clamouring for a bigger place in the sun, and who were deserting in

their thousands to the Labour Party. No one perceived these things, or understood their significance, more clearly than did Lloyd George; and he was obviously unhappy. Yet the more did he strain at the leash in his desire to quit the exhausted pastures of the old Liberalism, the more was he suspected and criticised by the more orthodox members of the Party, who were, unfortunately, in a large majority, and also in control of the official organisations. There were grave dissensions in the Cabinet in the autumn of 1913 over the Naval Estimates, as well as over the question of the exclusion of Ulster from the Home Rule Bill. Churchill was demanding more and more money for the Navy; while Lloyd George held that the First Lord was extravagant and provocative. Again and again the Chancellor informed the Prime Minister that either he or Churchill would have to resign. But that, Asquith well knew, would mean not only the break-up of the Government, but the splitting of the Party as a whole. He informed Lloyd George that if he persisted in carrying out his threat to resign, it would be out of the question for the Government to continue in office, and that there would consequently have to be an immediate General Election. Letters were reaching Lloyd George by the score from Wales, urging him not to resign until Disestablishment had been carried. Finally, Churchill gave in, the estimates were reduced, and there were no resignations. Over the question of Ulster Lloyd George and Churchill were in agreement: both tended to favour exclusion. In the eyes of Lloyd George, Ulster was a small nation—another Wales, or another Transvaal—and as usual he was hostile to any attempt at coercion. The majority of the Cabinet, however, viewed the matter differently. There was, as between Lloyd George and some of his colleagues, a third, though an ephemeral, cause of friction, occasioned by an interview with ~~the~~

outstanding achievements? The personal success needs no emphasising: for the peasant lad, without the aid of money or schooling or one single influential friend, and living in a remote Welsh village, to have raised himself to a position high in the front rank of British statesmen, was a thing which well might be called romantic. If we turn from what he did for himself to what he did for others, two achievements, perhaps, stand out conspicuously. First, he compelled the British Parliament to recognise Wales as a political entity. When Disestablishment had been carried in the face of opposition, simply and solely because it was the desired policy of a small minority of British subjects, it could no longer be denied that that small minority were, as they claimed to be, a nation. Secondly, by the underlying assumption of all his social legislation, he completely altered the attitude of the State towards the working classes. He banished for ever the old idea of class distinction as something pertaining to the very nature of things. In that respect the Limehouse speech and its fellows marked the close of an epoch in our social history. Henceforward it would be difficult to speak of the existence of "The Poor" as anything but a reproach to "The Rich". For the first time the paramount claims of the community found full expression in the words of a British statesman holding high office, and busily engaged in translating ideals into legislative facts.



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